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Who Really Needs Protecting?

—Death of volunteer reveals dilemma facing China's environmental protection NGOs



By Xiao Rong

Feng Yong, 21, lost his young life in a frigid winter night that hit -30 degrees Centigrade on the 4,500 meters-above-sea-level Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau, where he was serving among a brave band of environmental protection volunteers.

Feng, who worked out of the Suonandajie natural preservation station in the Kekexili Nature Reserve, one of the main refuges for the endangered Tibetan antelope, and driver Li Mingli were found dead in a broken down jeep on December 1.

The deaths came as a great shock to the environmental community and have cast a shadow on China's burgeoning non-governmental environmental protection activities.

A funeral was held for Feng yesterday in his hometown of Chengdu, Sichuan province. His family, despite their great sorrow at losing their only son, have said they will not seek compensation from Green River, organizer of the volunteer team on which Feng served and one of China's first grassroots environmental protection organizations.

"It's our duty to make it up to Feng's family," said Yang Xin, founder of Green River.

Yang was able to establish the first grassroots natural preservation station in China in 1997, the Suonandajie station, through the proceeds of selling his book *Source of the Yangtze River* and collecting public donations.

Unexpected tragedy

"This accident is more of a thunderbolt," Li Liang, another volunteer involved in the incident, told *Beijing Today*. "We have experienced similar situations during our work there, some even more dangerous. But we managed to handle them."

Feng Yong and five other volunteers from the Suonandajie station went out to pick up litter left by tourists outside the reserve on November 30, according to Li. Their jeep broke down on the way back. Feng and another volunteer walked back to the station to organize a rescue party, while the rest headed back by another route.

After arriving at the station, Feng invited Li Mingli, a local driver at a neighboring building site, to drive out together to tow

the jeep back to the station. But they never returned. The next day, Li Liang and the rest of the team went out to search for them, only to find both frozen to death in the crippled jeep just behind the rescue vehicle, the engine of which was still running.

The two died of respiratory exhaustion and carbon monoxide toxicosis due to the extremely low nighttime temperature, according to the autopsy conducted by a legal medical expert.

An avoidable loss?

Caiga, director of the Kekexili Nature Reserve Administration Bureau said any discussion of whether Feng's death could have been avoided is moot.

He added that it is still necessary to draw an important lesson from Feng's case for the improvement of the environmental protection volunteer system.

If the station had two jeeps or basic communication equipment, like walkie-talkies, said Caiga, Feng Yong and Li Mingli would have had greater chances of surviving the ordeal.

"Outdoor survival skills are also important when facing possible dangers," he continued. "In this case, Feng Yong could have chosen to abandon the car and walk back to the Suonandajie station, which is not far away, and then seek help from neighboring stations of our administration."

The administration operates five natural preservation stations in the Kekexili Nature Reserve, the nearest of which is only 10 kilometers from the Suonandajie Station, Caiga told *Beijing Today*.

Yang Xin attributed the main cause of Feng's death not to his lack of outdoor experience, but to the limited equipment at the station.

"We usually teach our volunteers how to handle emergencies during our preliminary training. Feng Yong took quilts, food and enough fuel with him when he went out with Li Mingli to tow the jeep back, which showed he thought about protecting himself and was using the skills he had been taught," Yang said.

He added that while the station has basic equipment, the gear at the facility needs to be updated. When first established, the station was equipped like the South Pole Explora-

Feng Yong (below) stayed at the Suonandajie station (above) one month longer than required to help his volunteer successors.

Photo / Photocome.com



tion Station, with a 28-meter-high watchtower, solar and wind-power electricity generating and heat supply systems as well as a jeep, satellite phone and computer equipment.

"We have stopped using the satellite phone since this August due to its high costs, leaving only a wireless transmission telephone which happened to run out of electricity several days before Feng's death," explained Yang.

Overloaded organization

Yang described Feng's death as an unexpected shock that will no doubt have unfavorable effects on China's emerging

grassroots environmental protection activities.

"Some people will question whether we are adequately capable of organizing and supporting environmental protection activities for enthusiasts," he said.

In a commentary run in *Beijing Youth Daily* on December 6 titled "Environmental Protection or Humanitarianism, Which to Choose", groups like Yang Xin's Green River that lack adequate funds, equipment, knowledge and technical support were called upon to exercise more prudence to avoid unnecessary disasters.

In Yang's words, China's grassroots environmental protection organizations are overloaded with responsibilities while struggling under insufficient resources.

"Under this situation, most groups are too weak to handle shocks like Feng's death," said Yang.

Yang's organization initiated the volunteer system at the Suonandajie station last year thanks to a 100,000-yuan donation from a Canadian foundation. This year, however, no more donations came in, and volunteers were required to cover their own transportation costs, while Green River paid for their accommodation and training.



Feng's 83-year-old grandmother broke down after hearing the news from former Green River volunteers.
Photo / Chengdu Business News

Clean-government Deposits On Trial

By Xiao Rong

The debut of a new kind of clean-government deposit in the capital, created in an effort to prevent corruption among officials, has sparked a fierce public debate in the past two weeks.

The local tax bureau of the Mentougou district became the main subject of discussion when the bureau announced on December 3 that it is experimenting with a new system of clean-government deposits to guarantee its efficiency and credibility.

These new, mandatory deposits are broken into two parts. First is an individual pre-paid deposit, which is followed by a matching amount of money from the bureau's unit encouragement fund. Each month a certain amount of money will be deducted from bureau employees' salaries to cover their individual pre-paid deposits, the amount depending on their positions.

Following standardized annual assessments of individual performance, employees given good ratings will receive the entire amount of their clean-government deposits back at the end of the year. The bureau will withhold or deduct money from the encouragement funds or individual deposits of staff members discovered to have been involved in improper or illegal activities.

This kind of deposit system, the first of its kind in Beijing, was initially put into practice this September in Liuyang, Hunan province. The two systems have some differences, as in Liuyang, work units pay twice the amount of money deducted as individual deposits each month. Moreover, deposits are only returned to officials after they retire and are proven innocent of illegal activities.

"Trials of the deposit system in our bureau actually began this October, and the overall effects over the past three months have been roundly positive," said Tian Xiulan, supervising department director of Mentougou local tax bureau.

She added that the system has been especially effective in pushing officials to be diligent and responsible in their daily work. Whether it will prove useful in preventing corruption remains to be seen.

Controversial comments about the new deposit system have flooded local newspapers and Internet chat sites. Some people hold that the deposit system shows no respect to officials, with its basic premise that all officials have the potential of being corrupt. Others question the effects of the deposit because the money deducted is negligible compared to the amounts greedy corrupt officials can take in.

"Deducting an average of 100 yuan, plus 100 yuan of unit encouragement funds per month leads to an annual deduction of 2,400 yuan, which comes to only 48,000 yuan over 20 years. This is too little a cost compared to the huge sums involved in official corruption," said Xia Yeliang, deputy professor at the Economics College of Beijing University.

"The main goal of the deposit system is to educate and supervise officials and promote their awareness of the need to be honest and responsible in their work," said Tian Xiulan. "Most people will get their deposits back together with the encouragement funds."

She said no officials in the bureau expressed dissatisfaction with the new system in a questionnaire survey conducted last week.

"The average monthly income of ordinary staff members is no higher than 2,000 yuan, so a deduction of 60 yuan is not a small amount, and puts pressure on all of us to perform well to get the money back," said Guo Wenqi from the promotion office of the bureau.

Aside from Mentougou district, the local tax bureaus of Xuanwu, Dongcheng and Fangshan districts are also initiating trial runs of the new deposit system.

EDITOR: LIU FENG DESIGNER: PANG LEI

Economic Conference Looks Ahead

Chinese leaders concluded a meeting in Beijing Tuesday to review its economic work in 2002 and formulate guidelines for economic development in 2003.

At the Central Economic Work Conference jointly held by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) and the State Council on December 9 and 10, Vice-President Hu Jintao, who is also general secretary of the 16th Central Committee of the CPC, summed up the economic work of 2002, analyzed the domestic and international situation, and proposed a general outline for 2003.

Premier Zhu Rongji unveiled a comprehensive strategy for the major tasks necessary for China's reform, development and stability.

The conference said that the country's gross domestic output in 2002 would top 10 trillion yuan (1.2 trillion US dollars) which

would be a hard-won achievement amid the global economic downturn.

The general guideline stressed the importance of expanding domestic consumption and continuing with the proactive fiscal policy and prudent monetary policy in 2003.

Taking development as the main theme for the economic work of 2003, the conference said the proactive fiscal policy would continue and more state bonds would be issued to facilitate economic development.

Capital raised through the bonds would be channeled to major construction projects, to ecological conservation programs, and to rural areas in order to improve rural living and working conditions and increase farmers' incomes.

The funds would also be spent on facilitating the country's tech-

nical advancement, on helping enterprises make more technical renovations to secure sustained development, and on creating more favorable conditions for central and western China to build up their economies.

The conference said the government encouraged non-state investment in important sectors and major construction programs, but would remain guarded against wasteful duplications in construction.

On industrial restructuring, the conference said the fundamental position of agriculture should be secured and the development of townships should be accelerated to create more job opportunities for redundant rural labor.

It also stressed that industrialization must be pushed forward in a way to boost the development of both new high-tech sectors and labor-intensive

sectors.

The development of the tertiary industry, the upgrading of traditional sectors and the transformation of old industrial bases would also be quickened.

The conference said the basic economic system, with public ownership playing a dominant role, and diverse forms of ownership developing side by side would be unswervingly upheld and improved.

China would boost the development of the public economy and continue to encourage, support and guide the growth of non-public economy, it said.

To push forward these reforms, the conference said more efforts must be made to improve the legal system and credit environments and institutions.

More attention would be given to the country's foreign trade as both the export structure and the

utilization of foreign investment must be further optimized.

Given that the improvement in living standards is the goal of building a relatively affluent society, the conference said the country would strive to increase the incomes of all Chinese by exploring more job opportunities and improving the social security system.

It called for efforts to promote sustained, rapid and healthy economic growth by deepening reform, opening wider to the outside world, quickening industrial restructuring, accelerating the development of agriculture and the rural economy, and taking a new road to industrialization.

To improve living standards and maintain social stability, the conference said employment and re-employment work must be well done, and the social security system must be improved.

(Xinhua)

New Agency for Foreign Investors

By April Lee

An authority from Beijing Foreign Investment Service Center (BFISC) said that a specialized agency for the promotion of foreign investment would be established before the end of this year.

The function of this agency is to publicize Beijing's policy on foreign investment and to build a bridge between the government and investors both of home and abroad. It will report the requirements of both Chinese and foreign investors and make suggestions on how to improve the investment environment. Furthermore, this specialized agency will serve as an intermediary organization to consult investors on policies, laws, regulations and application procedures regarding investment and trade and other economic activities.

BFISC, founded in 1988, is the organization authorized by the Beijing Municipal Government to serve foreign investors, as the standing working body of the Beijing Foreign Investment Enterprises Association and the governing body of the foreign-funded enterprises in Beijing. Since its founding, the center has received several thousand investor groups from all over the world and has provided consulting service to around 10,000 investors. It has managed applications for the establishment of representative offices in Beijing for more than 600 foreign enterprises.

Return the Beverage

By Ena Ma

Following the example of manufacturers of computers, automobiles and other durable consumer goods, the beverage industry decided last week to guarantee free replacement of defective products. The Beijing Food & Beverage Chamber states that the stringent regulations on beverage return are based on the International Food Code.

According to the chairman Feng Guoxi, the Chamber's 400 members represent two-thirds of Beijing's beverage industry.

In addition to excessive bacteria content and poor juice consistency, the most serious problem faced by the beverage industry is the unhygienic packaging of bottled water.

Once the rules go into effect, quality inspection authorities will be responsible for reporting to the Chamber the production date and serial number of all substandard beverage products detected through periodical sample inspection. The Chamber will supervise the company's recalling of all defective batches from the market, based on data stored in the Chamber, including distribution.

Furthermore, the Chamber will establish commissions to monitor recycled packaging and food additives, and to appraise packaging material and the hygienic status of caps on bottled beverages.

Does Nestlé Have a Double Standard ?

By Shan Jinliang

Greenpeace Hong Kong accused Swiss food maker Nestlé last week of using genetically modified (GM) organisms, of not labelling them, and of violating Chinese laws. Nestlé rejected this claim.

Greenpeace further accused Nestlé of double standards as it continues to sell GM products in Asia, even though European public pressure has forced it to stop using GM ingredients for products sold in Europe. Nestlé

also denies this claim.

Nestlé says in a public statement, "Nestlé has no double standards and has made its position on gene technology known all around the world, including in China. In every country where Nestlé operates, Nestlé respects the local culture and adapts to the local environment, and strictly adheres to laws and regulations regarding food safety and food labeling in every country in which it operates."

A considerable importer of agri-

cultural produce, China is especially concerned with GM product security and issued a new regulation this January. It stipulates that five categories of 17 kinds of GM plants and associated products must carry a special GM label from the Ministry of Agriculture before they are allowed to enter the Chinese market after March 20. The list of products includes corn, soybean, rapeseed, cottonseed and tomato.

To date, no GM labels have been found on Nestlé's products.



Photos by Wang Zheng

Farewell My Master

By Su Wei

Yuan Shihai, the 86-year-old master of Beijing Opera, passed away at Beijing Fuxing Hospital in the morning of December 11 due to heart failure, leaving his family, friends and former colleagues at China Beijing Opera Academy in shock.

"Shortly after returning from Shenyang, Liaoning province, on December 10, he called me to participate in the opera entertainment for the approaching festival," says Wu Jiang, president of the Academy.

His eldest daughter, Yuan Jing, says Yuan showed no abnormal symptoms even on the night before his death. "He had a western dinner with my younger brother, Yuan Xiaohai, at Yanjing Hotel, after having his hair cut and taking a bath," she remembers. "They did not come back until 10 pm. My father was in good spirits, telling us he would play the role of Cao Cao - a complex, brilliant character, often humorous, and surprisingly sometimes even likeable, although he is clearly evil to the core - again in a festival to be held by the Academy during Spring Festival to celebrate his birthday."

At 7:30 am that fateful morning of December, Yuan suffocated while brushing his teeth. An ambulance



Yuan Shihai

arrived ten minutes later and brought him to nearby Fuxing Hospital, but despite all rescue efforts, he died a few hours later at 10:50 am.

Born Yuan Ruilin on February 11, 1916, as a child he first learned "sheng" (the positive male role of Beijing opera) before turning to "jing" (dahuailian, a supporting male role with a painted face). He later changed his name to Yuan Shihai.

He was regarded as the greatest "jing" actor in the circles of Beijing opera. He enjoyed his reputation and made breakthroughs in jiazi hualian

(a branch of "jing" which specializes in dance / acting skills), creating his own performance school, designing new plays, and main streaming the role of "jing" in Beijing opera.

One of his best known roles was Cao Cao in the Romance of the Three Kingdoms, a character Yuan spent around 70 years working to understand and interpret. He once said the deeper his research, the more vividly he portrayed his character.

Wu Jiang considers Yuan's death a loss not only to the Academy but also to Beijing opera and Chinese culture as a whole. "In each performance, he analyzed and involved his own emotions in his characters, as well as adopting stylized forms of Beijing opera."

Yuan's family does not have a mourning hall at home. "The house is furnished as before," says Yuan Jing. "We do not want to have such a hall. He liked warmth. He was a genuine man of integrity. We would like his passing away to be as natural as his performance on stage."

Yuan's memorial service will be held on December 22 (the beginning of the Winter Solstice - the 22nd of the 24 solar terms in the Chinese lunar year) at the Chinese Beijing Opera Academy, in order to "wish him good luck for a new period."

US, China Sign Tech Pact

WASHINGTON, Dec. 11 (Dow Jones Newswires)- A Chinese official expressed hope Wednesday that the U.S. would expand its list of permissible exports to China, as the U.S. and China signed a new agreement Wednesday to cooperate on science and technology issues.

Xu Guanhua, China's minister of science and technology policy, signed the new pact along with U.S. Commerce Secretary Don Evans. The protocol focuses on civilian industrial technology, as well as scientific and technical information and policy.

The agreement pledges reciprocal access to scientific literature, contact between U.S. and Chinese academics and scientists, and cooperation on measurement technology and standard-setting. The agreement makes allowances for patent laws and security concerns that would limit or prohibit sharing of some information. (Rebecca Christie)

Beijing Science and Technology Week Goes Commercial

By Hou Mingxin

At a public bidding conference held on December 5, the organizing committee of the 2003 Beijing Science and Technology Week announced that the expo will be an open market. This means that as long as you are willing to pay for it, you can brand one of its events.

Up for sale in the public bidding are titling rights, advertising rights, and hosting rights of the 2003 Beijing Science and Technology Week, attracting strong interest from the attending enterprises.

Beijing Science and Technology Week has taken place annually every third week of May, with the purpose of popularizing science and technology among the general public. Since the first one held in 1995 with only a couple of events and about 100 thousand participants, last year's expo welcomed over 4 million people in more than one thousand events.

Originally supported exclusively by the Ministry of Science and Technology, the convention has been increasingly commercialized in the past two years.

Better Conditions for Scholars Abroad

By Hou Mingxin

On December 5, the China Scholarship Council (CSC) announced that it will revise its government-sponsored study abroad program. In its 2003 working plan, the Council will focus on seven research fields: telecommunication and information technology; agricultural high technology; life science and public health; material science; energy and environment; engineering; and applied sociology and WTO-related studies.

A special project for advanced research scholars will be set up in 2003. These scholars mainly include senior researchers from state key laboratories, key laboratories of the Ministry of Education, and candidates for Changjiang Scholars. They will be awarded a monthly scholarship of 1,800 to 2,000 US dollars.

According to the newly revised program, both advanced visiting scholars and general visiting scholars have been grouped under the term visiting scholar, and the research period for all sponsored scholars has been extended from 12 to 24 months.

Statistics show that by the end of September, 2002, the Council had sponsored a total of 12,401 citizens, 9,929 of whom have since returned. In 2002, 2,235 out of 4,109 applicants were awarded a government-sponsored scholarship in 57 foreign countries.



Photo by Shan Jinliang

Enron's Withdrawal Leaves China Cheering

By Zhao Hongyi

Enron, the bankrupted former US power giant, sold one of its most highly prized Chinese assets last week to a local non-state investment group, Linfeng Group based in Chengdu, Sichuan.

Enron said it regretted having to do the deal but locals celebrated as it was the first time a Chinese company had bought assets from a *Fortune* Global 500 company. It is also the first time a private domestic company has entered the long state-monopolized power industry.

Enron's loss is Linfeng's gain

The property is Enron's 51 percent stake in the Sichuan Jialing Electric Power Co., a joint venture between Enron and Sichuan Electric Power Co., which owns the remaining 49 percent stake.

The price was US\$50 million, down from Enron's \$56.5 million initial investment made two years ago. The project is focused on power generation, as well as steam and hot wa-

ter production for industrial uses.

Enron, which is badly in need of cash to pay its debts back in the US, started selling its properties in China last year.

It sold the \$45 million gas exploration project in Chuanzhong in Sichuan, a joint venture with PetroChina, to US-based Burlington Resources last year. The project has since proved itself profitable. Burlington Resources says 20 wells have discovered substantial natural gas reserve potential. The project has entered the appraisal stage of development, including the drilling of new wells and stimulation of existing wells.

After nearly one year spent selecting the appropriate buyer and heavy bargaining, Enron finally picked Linfeng as the buyer for Jialing Power. Sichuan Jialing has already made outstanding progress. Enron took home profits of \$6 million from the venture last year alone.

Rapidly emerging Linfeng

It's another triumph for Linfeng's 36-year-old president, Zhang Yong.

Zhang hails from Xinjiang. He spent two years working at a hotel in Hong Kong, after which he got involved in sugar and Chinese wine.

In 1998, Zhang also moved into real estate by purchasing 133.33 hectares of commercial land in Chengdu, Sichuan Province. Here, Zhang built commercial resident apartments for sale and accumulated his fortune at rocket speed. The young man spread his real estate business to Beijing, Shanghai, Chongqing, Kunming and Guiyang. Headquartered in Beijing, Zhang's empire now has regional branches in Chengdu and the US and has total assets of 6.8 billion yuan. Zhang was listed by *Forbes* magazine as the 19th richest man in China last month, with private property of \$240 million.

Zhang has also moved into a number of other industries such



Zhang Yong

Photo / Linfeng.com.cn

as bio-products, digital science, hotels and restaurants, and capital management.

Despite his success, Zhang prefers to hide from the public eye. Local media said Zhang was quite annoyed to be "exposed" by *Fortune* magazine.

But at the signing ceremony with Enron, Zhang made his ambitious targets public, saying he will "focus Linfeng's business in five categories, namely: energy, medical, financing, construction and IT".

American Express Swings into China

By Shan Jinliang

US-based American Express, the world's largest tourism management company, took an aggressive stride into China by setting up a joint venture tourism service network with China International Travel Service (CITS) on December 3. It follows on from the business travel joint venture the company set up with CITS last May.

The service network will cooperate with domestic travel agencies in developing their services. American Express claimed the new network would make it the largest tourism wholesale dealer in China. It's also an indicator of possible industry restructuring.

The recent joint ventures set up by American Express and other overseas travel companies such as Accor and UTI have come in the wake of China opening up its tourism market as part of its WTO commitments. American Express is the biggest name to arrive so far.

According to the contract signed on December 3, American Express assigned CITS as its local franchise. CITS will have the right to sign up other domestic travel agencies as network partners under the brand of "American Express-CITS". In the first week following the agreement, more than 10 small and medium-sized travel agencies have applied to CITS to join the network, but the lack of specific regulations for membership mean it's impossible for anyone to join just yet.

Success is not guaranteed for American Express however, as other top domestic travel agencies like China Comfort Travel (CCT), China Youth Travel Service (CYTS) and GZL International Travel Service are making efforts of their own to compete for the market. Fang Xiangrong, marketing man-



Put it there! American Express joins hands with CITS.

Photo / Beijing times

ager of CCT said his company had also started developing a wholesale network since early this year. It already has 18 local sales partners around the country. CYTS has also become a big tourism wholesale dealer with more than 16 franchised offices in Beijing.

Dai Bin, a tourism professor from China Tourism Institute, pointed out that besides competition from domestic travel agencies, overseas companies will face another problem: the lack of a social credit system. According to Dai, it will be a long time before an effective social credit system is es-

tablished, even though Shanghai, Beijing and other big cities started initiating the credit plan a couple of years ago.

China's WTO commitments allow for the establishment here of a foreign controlled travel agency by 2003 and a wholly foreign owned travel agency by 2005. American Express, it seems, has chosen the strategy of "seizing market first and profits later" by paving the way with joint ventures with local big players.

Chinese companies are strengthening themselves against the foreign invasion by shrugging off their principal burden - bad corporate

governance because of state ownership status. After the Guangdong-based GZL International turned into a shareholding company from a state-owned one in 1998, CCT became China's first large-scale tourism company to launch a management buyout last month.

Dai said the market would eventually be dominated by several big wholesale dealers but said that this could take another five years. China's travel agency market generated around 40 billion yuan last year, and CITS earned revenue of just two billion. For now, the state is still the boss.

Dawn of the Head Hunters

By Ema Ma

Six foreign head hunting companies have been approved to provide executive human resources solutions in Beijing, following the decision in October by Beijing Personnel Bureau to open up this market. They are Korn/Ferry International, Heidrick & Struggles, MRI, E.L. Consult, Bo Le Associates Ltd. and China HR.

Targeting senior-level executives

Four hundred of the world's top 500 multinational companies have come to China seeking profits from a largely untapped market. Facing the severe challenge from these foreign companies, one of the hardest problems for Chinese companies is to find appropriate

senior-level executives with an international background.

"Our mission is to provide global access to top talent for these emerging local companies and our overseas customers," said Kevin Kelly, president of Heidrick & Struggles, Asia-Pacific.

All of these six approved companies specialize in recruitment of top executives, such as director, CEO and president. This positioning in the high level market leaves space for local recruitment agents to continue their lower-level head hunting business. At least for the near future, there should be no overlapping between the foreign and local head hunting companies.

Seeking top men

Since first emerging in the 1920s,

head hunting companies have developed a set of operating standards and global networks. Through close affiliation with some of the world's leading executives and involvement with top business schools, leadership workshops and roundtables, the companies have established a global talent bank classified by industry sector. After receiving a request from a client company, the first step is to become familiar with the client, including its background, operating status, future plan, enterprise culture and specific requirements for the post.

After the first stage of research, the consultants will match the specific requirements with the data in their talent bank. When a suitable person is found, the consultants be-

gin the third step, contacting and interviewing the candidate.

From the first contact between the candidate and the customer to the final signing of the employment contract, the head hunters negotiate every aspect. This service doesn't come cheap: the commission fee is usually billed at a third of the first year's pay.

Boost for local HR market

Under the planned economy, human resources is not exactly big business as most employees are appointed by the government.

After introduction of the concept of a human capital market, China suddenly awoke to the value of human resources. A primitive labor market mainly aiming at low-level talent has been organized to contribute to the free movement of personnel. Thus far, the top end of the head hunting market has not been developed. This is about to change.

Yinguangxia to Return to Stock Market

By Shan Jinliang

Trading of stock in Guangxia (Yinchuan) Industry, or Yinguangxia, will resume on Shenzhen Stock Exchange from December 16, following suspension of the stock on June 15. Yinguangxia was involved in a major corporate scandal in 2001 after it was found to have fabricated profits of 745 million yuan (\$90 million).

Yinguangxia, based in Yinchuan, capital of Ningxia Autonomous Region, became a listed company in 1993 with its business focusing on producing computer discs. It was considered one of China's best stock buys in recent years. On December 29, 2000, shares in the company had risen to 37.99 yuan from 13.97 yuan a year before, a 440% rise. If it seemed too good to be true, it was. The company's fix was exposed on August 2, 2001 by *Business & Finance Review*. After its suspension from trading for one month, it broke the record in China's securities market by undergoing a consecutive 15-day drop from 30.79 to 6.35 yuan per share.

On September 5, CSRC (China Securities Regulatory Commission) announced that Yinguangxia had fabricated profits of 745 million yuan by way of counterfeiting purchasing and selling contracts, export declaration statements, added value tax invoices, duty-free documents, financial notes and business revenue.

Stock in the company was suspended from trading this June. From June to December, the company launched capital and debt restructuring, switched management, made large adjustments in business scope, sold bad assets and cut its debts, according to a statement the company released last week. The statement added the company began to make profits in the first half of 2002, and that its accounts had been audited by Zhongqin Wanxin Accounting Office. The Shenzhen Stock Exchange said the Yinguangxia stock would require an audit every time its stock rose or fell by more than five percent.

Lucky Cuts Price to Shake-up Pre-festival Market

By Shan Jinliang

Starting from Monday, consumers around China began to enjoy a preferential price of Lucky Film Super 100 of just 10 yuan a roll, 30 percent lower than the original 12.8 yuan.

The price cut was formally started in Harbin, Heilongjiang Province to observe the opening of the country's Tenth National Winter Games. Though Lucky said the price cut was just a bonus for consumers, experts still feared it might trigger a price war. Last January, a price war among Lucky, Kodak and Fuji saw Lucky film cut to less than 10 yuan.

Lucky, which has a 20 percent share of the film market, is the only big China-based film maker, with Kodak and Fuji sharing most of the remaining 80 percent of the market.

Concerning the price cut, Wang Shulin, Lucky Film Group deputy general manager denied it had anything to do with "market pressure". He said Lucky had made progress in technological innovation and improving management, as well as striking back against the growing film smuggling and counterfeit industry. Lucky says it suffers losses of tens of millions of yuan each year because of film smuggling.

Since Lucky only reduced the price of its most popular product Super 100, which targets the budget market, analysts say the price cut was intend to consolidate its status in the lower-end market before the peak sales season just before the Spring Festival.

The prices of films Kodak and Fuji import are already much lower in China than in Japan, and this is one reason why industry insiders don't believe Kodak and Fuji will follow Lucky's move and cut their prices further.

Currently, Kodak, Fuji and Konica films cost 18 to 22 yuan, and because of tariffs they are unable to change their prices straight away.

A film dealer who refused to be named said since the overseas brands have a much bigger market share than Lucky, they simply don't think it is necessary to launch a price cut. "The film market competition lies in the brand competition," he added.

Lucky Super 100 is still sold at 12.8 yuan or 13 yuan in some Kodak and other chain stores, and Lucky Head Office in Baoding, Hebei Province said it could take a few days for the market to adjust their retail prices.



Will consumers buy it?

Photo by Shan Jinliang

Agilent Opens Research Center in Beijing

By Chen Ying

Agilent Technologies Inc. (NYSE: A) announced the opening of China Communications Operation (CCO) in Beijing on Wednesday to design, develop and market products for the communications industry driven by the needs of China and Asia-Pacific customers.

"The opening of this center is a milestone for Agilent in China," said Wayne Chan, Agilent's vice president and general manager for Greater China.

CCO's core capabilities will be in the area of advanced software development in telecommunications design, testing and monitoring systems. Approximately 70 percent of all wireless phones manufactured worldwide are tested during production using Agilent equipment.

"We will continue to expand our communications operation, drawing on the high level of local talent," said Earl Thompson, general manager of CCO. Currently the operation employs 120 people and it will be 170 in the coming year.

In January 2002, Agilent announced a multi-million investment package directed at establishing local solutions and services, delivery resources, and capabilities in China. This was followed by the rollout of the industry's first TD-SCDMA test solutions in April and the opening of the Shanghai Instrument Service Center in July.

China Lauds Anniversary of WTO Inclusion

BEIJING, Dec. 11 (AP) - China's state media cheered the first anniversary of its hard-won World Trade Organization membership Wednesday, saying it was boosting trade while making the state-dominated economy more open and competitive.

Noting that trade this year is expected to hit new record highs, newspapers described China as an exemplary member of the rule-making body for world commerce.

China became a WTO member on December 11, 2001, in Doha, Qatar, capping a 15-year quest.

(Christopher Bodeen)

Analysts' Take:

Deng Hongbo, director, Beijing WTO Center

In the past year, China has started the opening up of markets for imports and overseas investment in agriculture, construction, insurance, retailing, banking, power generating, service, securities, mining and foreign trade.

China reduced import tariffs on more than 5,000 commodities and lowered its average import tariff from 15.3 percent to 12 percent.

Thirty ministries and agencies under the State Council cleared up and revised 2,300 laws and regulations, of which 830 have been stopped



A worker removes stains from a glass window advertisement at a shopping mall in Shanghai. WTO entry stimulated China's ad industry, which was worth \$7 billion in the first six months of this year and ranked first in Asia, according to official figures.

Reuters Photo

being enforced.

Chinese companies have increased awareness of using the rights and channels brought by the country's WTO entry in solving trade disputes with other countries.

Robert A. Kapp, president, US-China Business Council

In the starkest of glass half full/glass half empty terms, we consider the glass more than half full as the end of the first year of China's WTO entry approaches.

China has spent its first year focusing on WTO infrastructure and on

tor-General, World Trade Organization

Most WTO members are satisfied with China's implementation of its WTO entry promises.

Transparency in the country's legal system and administration is one of the great steps forward made so far.

I believe China will find its position in the WTO as a bridge between the developed and developing members. But it will take time to fully come into that role.

— Chinese "Caijin" magazine

Sun Zhenyu, Chinese ambassador to the World Trade Organization

We revised a huge number of laws and regulations, reduced import tariffs and non-tariff restrictions such as quotas and import licenses, and started opening our markets and industries to overseas exporters and investors as per the agreed itinerary.

— People's Daily

Christian Murck, chairman, American Chamber of Commerce in China

China had scored two major obvious accomplishments, revising existing laws and regulations, and reducing tariff rates.

China is also benefiting from WTO accession with more foreign investment and lower prices for products.

— Xinhua News Agency

Firm Fined For Itered Corn in Soybeans

WASHINGTON, Dec. 7 (Washington Post) - The company that mishandled genetically engineered corn in the US states of Iowa and Nebraska agreed yesterday to pay a \$250,000 fine, the first such penalty the US federal government has ever imposed, and to spend as much as \$3 million to destroy tons of soybeans that might have been mixed with the corn.

The outcome is a severe financial hit for tiny ProdiGene Inc. of College Station, Texas, and government administrators said it was meant in part as a signal to other companies that they must comply scrupulously with regulations designed to keep plants containing drugs or industrial enzymes out of the food supply. Many environmental and consumer groups had questioned whether the government was doing enough to regulate such plants.

(Justin Gillis)

Analysts' Take:

Official who requested anonymity, Department of Science and Education, Ministry of Agriculture

China uses a labeling system for trans-genetic agri-products importing, development, planting and sales.

Our ministry has listed five products, namely soybeans, corn, rape, cotton and tomatoes, as requiring labels before being delivered for sale. The list also covers processed products like soybean seeds, soybean powder and soybean cooking oils.

The ministry monitors imports of all trans-genetic agri-products. Agriculture administrative agencies in provincial and municipal governments monitor local tran-genetic agri-product development, planting and transactions. All products in the five categories, either imported or domestically developed and planted, should be licensed and labeled clearly before being sold.

As to other trans-genetic agri-products outside these five categories, China hasn't yet officially established a management system. But we'll improve our monitoring and licensing system whenever and wherever needed.

Shi Yuanchun, academician, Chinese Academy of Science, Chinese Academy of Engineering

Since the first group of trans-genetic products (tobacco and potatoes) emerged in 1983, 16 percent of the world's farms have used trans-genetic technologies. In the US, one third of corn farms and half of cotton farms use trans-genetic technologies.

Hundreds of millions of people around the world consume over 4,000 types of trans-genetic foods, and thousands of experiments are under way to develop new trans-genetic food products.

There is a rising trend in the use of trans-genetic technologies in the agriculture industry, particularly in populous countries like China.

ECB Cuts Interest Rate

FRANKFURT, GERMANY (AP) - The European Central Bank tried to give the continent's flagging economy a lift last week with a half-percentage point cut in its interest rate - a step aimed at boosting confidence despite worries about turbulent stock markets and possible war with Iraq.

The ECB cut its key refinancing rate to 2.75 percent from 3.25 percent, where it had stood for 13 months to the growing dismay of

governments, investors and many economists.

The bank president Wim Duisenberg said that growth in the 12 nations that share the euro - already sluggish at 0.3 percent in the third quarter - was threatened by "the persistently high degree of uncertainty."

(David McHugh)

Analysts' Take:

Yang Weiguo, Institute of European Studies, Chinese Academy of

Social Sciences

Clearly, the ECB wants to raise investment and consumer confidence within the Euro block. But I don't think it will have the expected effects.

First, backed by \$50 billion of reserves and only the promises of comparatively independent member countries, the 600 billion Euros issued make it a weak currency compared to the US dollar.

Secondly, a monetary policy adjustment needs at least six to

twelve months to show effects in the market.

Thirdly, an interest rate reduction is aimed at stimulating investment. But if the average investment revenue rate is lower than the interest rate, you can't persuade investors to increase investment.

Europe needs to reform its whole social system and allow more competition and new industries to emerge, if it wants to have sustainable and significant economic growth.

EU Unveils Merger Reforms

BRUSSELS, Dec. 11 (Dow Jones Newswire) - The European Union Commission's antitrust chief, Mario Monti, unveiled merger-rules reforms aimed at making it easier for companies to defend their merger deals in Europe.

The reforms make it tougher for deals to be blocked and add to companies' arguments for their mergers, including the "efficiency" defense.

The new system moves the EU closer to US standards. In the US, antitrust officials must convince a judge that a merger should be prohibited.

The reforms will be "a model to be emulated worldwide," Mr. Monti said in a statement.

(William Echikson)

Fed Reserve Keeps Rates Steady

WASHINGTON, Dec. 10 (Reuters) - The US Federal Reserve kept interest rates steady at four-decade lows on Tuesday, saving its dwindling ammunition in hope the economy can forge its way past a "soft spot" to more vigorous growth in 2003.

The unanimous decision leaves the trend-setting federal funds rate at 1.25 percent, the level it hit after the Fed slashed borrowing costs by a bold half percentage point in November.

Fed officials left no doubt the US central bank could and would act to boost economic activity again, regardless how low current rates were.

(Glenn Somerville)

Mild Seven Mulls Rename in EU

BRUSSELS, Dec. 11 (Dow Jones Newswires) - Japan Tobacco Inc. is mulling a new name for Mild Seven following a ruling by the EU's highest court.

The court upheld a law banning the words "mild" and "light" from cigarette packets in EU countries after October 2003.

Philip Morris' Marlboro Lights and Nabisco's Camel Lights must also be renamed.

However, US tobacco companies have not opposed the legislation because brand recognition means they can simply drop the "mild" or "light" from the names Marlboro and Camel.

"It's like telling like telling Coca Cola that they can't use the word Coca in the name," says Guy Cote, a spokesman for JT International SA.

(Victoria Knight)

OPEC Seeks to Curb Overproduction

VIENNA, Austria, Dec. 11 (AP) - Members of OPEC debated Wednesday how to rein in overproduction and avert a slide in crude prices if demand slackens as expected next spring.

The cartel's goal is to keep prices at around \$25 a barrel. Prices could tumble to below \$20 a barrel without a cut in output, Saudi Arabian Oil Minister Ali Naimi told reporters.

OPEC, which produces about one-third of the world's oil, has an output target of 21.7 million barrels a day, but exceeds it by about 2.5 million barrels, many analysts say.

(Bruce Stanley)

Auschwitz Survivor and Science Pioneers Get Nobel

STOCKHOLM, Dec. 10 (Reuters) - Scientists who made it possible to discover distant stars, shed light on diseases from cancer to AIDS and an Auschwitz survivor whose essays portrayed the Nazi death camps received Nobel prizes on Tuesday.

Hungarian novelist Imre Kertesz, 73, was awarded the literature prize for works that drew on his experience in Auschwitz, the wartime death camp in German-occupied Poland where more than one million Jews and other victims perished, portraying it as "the ultimate truth" about how low man can fall.

Earlier, former US President Jimmy Carter received the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo.

In Stockholm, the physics prize went to Raymond Davis, 87, and Riccardo Giacconi, 71, of the United States and Masatoshi Koshihara, 76, of Japan for exploring the principles of neutrino astronomy and making it possible to discover distant stars.

The chemistry prize went to John Fenn, 85, of the US, Switzerland's Kurt Wuthrich, 64, and Koichi Tanaka, 43, of Japan for developing analytical tools to study molecules, which could lead to new drugs to treat diseases.

The 2002 medicine prize was handed to Britons Sydney Brenner, 75, and John Sulston, 60, and Robert Horwitz, 55, of the United States. Their work on how cells divide and die and how genes regulate this shed light on diseases from AIDS to cancer.

The economics prize went to American-Israeli Daniel Kahneman, 68, and 75-year-old Vernon Smith of the US, pioneers of behavioral research, honored for showing how psychology affects people's buying decisions and for developing laboratory tests in economics.

(Anna Peltola)



2002 Nobel literature laureate, the Hungarian novelist Imre Kertesz
Reuters / Xinhua Photo



Jingle Bells, Again!

With Christmas approaching, Europeans are starting their once-a-year shopping crazy, which usually lasts throughout December. Shops and stores are entering the most prosperous business times in a year.

In the Kohlmarkt, a shopping center in downtown Vienna, Austria, customers crowd the streets, enjoying the annual leisure time. However, the Austrian Federal Chamber of Commerce estimates the whole country's December retail sales volume will not exceed the amount of last year.

Xinhua Photo

Hey Baby, What's Your Sign?

By Lily Li

Beijing Maternity Hospital is crammed this month. Beds are lacking, pregnant women line up early for examination, doctors are too busy to take regular breaks, and the number of babies is growing every day.

Experts estimate that the New Year's Day period will be peak child-bearing time, as many families avoid having babies in the upcoming Year of the Sheep, according to China's Earthly Branch, which is supposed to signify bad fortune.

Fan Ling, dean doctor of Gynecology and Obstetrics in Beijing Maternity Hospital, says that the number of newborns has jumped in the last seven months from 300 to 600. "Sometimes as many as 40 babies are born in one day," says Professor Yang of Peking University Hospital. Ever since 2002, the number of babies has increased with each passing month. "November is peak birth month in our hospital, with almost 300 newborns," he adds.

The ward has been booked solid leading up to January 2003, in contrast to a record of only 50 expecting women booked for the whole month of February. According to Tang Jun, a



Future mothers wait for examination at Beijing Maternity Hospital.

Photo by Jackey

doctor in Beijing Maternity Hospital, certain animal years have obviously "interfered" with the national birth rate. The highest birth rate years are Dragon, Rooster and Horse, while Sheep and Tiger years are the lowest.

Zhao Shu, an expert on folklore, says birth-day fatalism is not a folk-custom, but a local saying. "People don't like sheep because they don't understand traditional culture," he says. "The sheep is just one of the six symbolic beasts of the Earthly Branches, and in no way

determines the baby's fate. Furthermore, ancient people believed the sheep was a kind animal with a Chinese character that composes a lot of good words."

According to the Family Planning Committee, choosing the best animal year for a baby is most important to the grand-parents, while today's parents pay little attention to such traditional ideas. But the Committee also points out that every mature couple has the right to decide for themselves when their children should be born.

Duan Chengrong, associate professor in the Population Research Center of Renmin University, said animal years have hardly influenced the Chinese birth rate in the past decade.

Meanwhile Kong Zhenying, master of Fang Zhuang Second Kindergarten, says that sheep-year children will have good luck. "In popular animal years such as this one, three classes expanded from the previous two are still not enough to hold all the children. When the children born in the year of the Sheep go to school, it will be a lot less crowded and a lot less competitive."

Dial 'Yuan' for Murder

By Su Wei / Yang Xinli

The 82-year-old retired cadre of the People's Liberation Army never imagined that "making friends" with his 43-year-old housemaid would cost him his life.

Feng, whose full name has been withheld by the No. 2 Municipal People's Procuratorate, was looking for someone to take care of him since his wife died in 1999.

One of his acquaintances introduced him to his future murderer, Yuan Xiuzhen, at the end of 2001. Seduced by her attractive looks, Feng stretched his original intentions to also "make friends" with Yuan.

Feng did not know that Yuan had been sentenced to 15 years of imprisonment in 1995 for swindling and bribery, obtained medical treatment in 1996, and was still in custody.

Yuan was surprised at Feng's attempt to befriend her, but she later agreed after considering his high social status and economic situation. "I needed the money," claims Yuan, who was at that time living with her boyfriend, several years her junior.

In order to win Feng's favor, Yuan regularly came to visit him and did some housework. She then asked him for money, anywhere from 500 to 1,000 yuan. "He wasn't too happy about that," admits Yuan.

Since May, Yuan had been finding it increasingly difficult to get money out of Feng, and she finally gave him

the cold shoulder. Once Feng discovered that she was living with her boyfriend, he asked her on several occasions to give back the money. Yuan says it had never occurred to her to actually kill Feng until he asked her to pay him back in public, right in the dining hall of the rest home. "He made me lose face," she mutters.

On August 5th of this year, Yuan asked Feng for 2,000 yuan, Feng refused, they quarrelled, and Feng showed her a notebook recording the exact dates and amounts of money Yuan had "borrowed."

On August 9, Yuan went to visit Feng's apartment equipped with a knife and a change of clothes. This time when Feng asked her to give the money back, Yuan pushed him down and smashed him on the head with a wine bottle. Feng groaned loudly. Several minutes later, Feng had stopped groaning, so Yuan put her hand near Feng's nose to see if Feng was still alive. "He bit me," cries Yuan, who then proceeded to punch him again and smother his face with a towel until he finally stopped breathing.

She then removed Feng's clothes and pulled him in to the bathroom.

But before she could exit the scene of the crime, there was a knock on the front door. Moments later, neighbors who had heard Feng's groans broke the door down and rushed in. Yuan was caught red-handed. She is now awaiting trial.

What's in a Name?

By Su Wei

After being refused for the fourth time in 11 years when applying to change his name, a 53-year-old teacher Wang Wenlong finally succeeded in renaming himself Aogu Guye.

Wang, a retired Chinese teacher of the No.2 Middle School of Jinding Street, in Shijingshan District, says he refused to give up this time when his application was refused by the Shijingshan Branch of the Public Security Bureau on November 5. "I went to the Shijingshan District People's Court on November 11 and lodged a suit against the Shijingshan branch for 'not administrating registration on the basis of law,'" he says. "I have spent over two years studying the laws and regulations of name-changing."

On December 2, the branch informed him that they had approved his application, and he dropped suit the next day. "You should call me Mr. Aogu," Wang corrects *Beijing Today* during the interview.

When *Beijing Today* contacted Shijingshan Branch, they refused to give any comment and referred inquiry to the Beijing Public Security Bureau. Zhang, unwilling to give her full name, of the Bureau's household registration department, told *Beijing Today*

that an internal document issued by the Ministry of Public Security strictly controls the name-changing of all citizens over 18 years of age. "His name is too strange. I never heard of a Chinese with such a name," she says.

Wang claims the document is unlawful and quotes from the Civil Law, which states that every citizen has the right to decide, use and change his or her name based on certain regulations. "I am an adult and a human being. I am entitled to use the name given to me by my parents or not." He claims the only difference with him is that he chooses "not."

He says it is also common for literati to change their names, for they are more sensitive to the spiritual meaning of their names. "I majored in Chinese, and I consider myself a literati. My name should reflect my own feelings and ideas, not the will of others."

Wang says his name signifies his regret that much ancient culture and literature are poorly preserved and not inherited. "Ao (fourth tone) means profound; gu (third tone) means ancient; gu (first tone) means let down; and ye (first tone) is merely an auxiliary word. I love the sound of the rising and falling tones."

making it more complicated and having it installed it by your own staff," Wang confided to the journalist who was posing as a retailer.

"More than 20 beauty parlors in Beijing have already purchased our product," said Wang. He mentioned that the wholesale price of an artificial hymen is only 150 yuan, while it sold on the market for about 6,000 yuan. The injection for vaginal contraction wholesales for about 750 yuan per box of 12 injections, but retails for 1,000 yuan per injection.

"The owners of the beauty parlors will discreetly recommend the products to well-off women," said Wang.

Can't Beat Carrefour

By Lily Li

A bruised-faced Ding Jun told the media his nightmare of being beaten by seven security guards in Fangyuan Carrefour Supermarket on December 3.

He still hasn't recovered from the shock. On the afternoon of December 1, he and his girlfriend went shopping at Carrefour in Fangyuan. It wasn't until after they left the supermarket that he realized he had forgotten to reclaim his bag from the bag check. "I immediately took a taxi back to the store. But when I got there, a security guard informed me to come back at 9 pm. The beating occurred when I got into an argument with the security guards after I came back for the bag at 8 pm," he says.

At least one witness remembers the brutality vividly: "I will never forget the scene of a whole squad of security guards passing me by and thrashing him. I can't help but tremble, even now. I screamed, 'Don't beat him!' But nobody listened, nobody stopped."

"Those seven security guards had no reason to beat him," says Ding Jun's girlfriend. "Ding Jun had a claim slip just like all the other customers."

The details of the case are still under investigation, but a manager in the Security Department of Carrefour Northern District who refused to give his name claims that "The evidence we have is quite different from what the customers describe."

According to his evidence, security remained calm the whole time. It was the customer who reportedly shouted that the paper the security guard had given him would be burnt for the guard's mother (as is the Chinese tradition of burning paper



Ding Jun

Photo by Hao Jun

for the dead). And since the guard's mother was incidentally being hospitalized for critical care, he responded impulsively with violence.

"These men are not real security guards," he adds. He said the case had been reported to the security authorities, and the consequences would be decided after formal investigation by the police.

The Security Management Department of the Beijing Police Office says that no matter if the security guards are professional or in-house, their job is restricted to protecting the store. They have absolutely no legal authority, so beating a customer is certainly a violation of civil rights.

A policeman from Zi Zhuyuan Police Station investigating the case points out that this is not the first occurrence of beating in Fangyuan Carrefour Supermarket.

A manager in the Public Relations Department of Carrefour, who only gives her surname Liu, says that if the incident is confirmed, Carrefour will take immediate action to correct its staff and make up for its fault. "If it's true, Carrefour will certainly offer the injured party all medical and other compensation," she says.

Broken Tooth at Pizza Hut

By Lily Li

The trial's first judgement was announced on December 3 — Chaoyang District People's Court declared that the World Trade Center Pizza Hut Restaurant should apologize to its customer Shi Dan and compensate her 1,600 yuan for medical expenses, missed work, and inquiry fees over a broken tooth.

The plaintiff, Shi Dan, claims that she and her family were eating dinner at the Pizza Hut Restaurant in the World Trade Center on June 11, 2000, when she heard a loud sound inside her mouth and felt a sharp toothache. Immediately afterward, a bean-sized piece of iron dropped out of her mouth. The hospital diagnosed her with a fractured tooth. She demanded 30,000 yuan from Pizza Hut in compensation.

Since she claims negotiations with the restaurant over the past two years have been "ineffective," she had no other choice but to take the restaurant to court, legally requesting a written apology and compensation fees.

On September 24, 2002, Shi petitioned Chaoyang Court for a trial. Originally scheduled to begin at 10:30 am, it was delayed after the defendant's deputy lawyer raised an application for a closed-door trial on the grounds that "the trial will inevitably disclose procedures about the preparation and provision of salad in Pizza Hut Restaurants which are Pizza Hut's pro-



Photo by Qu Liyan

fessional secrets." The motion was approved, and the closed-door trial went on for two hours.

During this session, the plaintiff's lawyer Lü Xinwei retrieved the certificate of diagnosis and receipt from the hospital as evidence. However, Pizza Hut Restaurant protested that this evidence was insufficient to prove that it was Pizza Hut's salad on which Shi broke her tooth.

"It's possible that the piece of iron which caused the damage was the customer's misconception of the hard food and dishware," says Pizza Hut's attorney.

Sheng, lawyer of Kangde Law Office, expressed not only must Shi Dan prove that it was on Pizza Hut's salad that she broke her tooth, she must produce detailed receipts for her dental filling, if she wants the full 30,000 yuan she claims.

"If it's also a case of her upgrading her tooth to a more expensive one, the compensation fees should be considerably less," Wei reckons.



Children are amazed by Robert Gallup's rope tricks.

Photo by Ivy Zhang

Let Me Blow!

By Ivy Zhang

The magician tied three ropes into a knot and invited his young audience to blow on it.

"Let me blow!" cried every one of the impatient children, ranging in age from six to twelve years, jumping up, leaning forward, raising their hands high and shouting with all their might.

The rope was offered to a chubby-faced boy in the front rows who took a deep breath with bulging cheeks, and blew for all he was worth. "One more time!" said the smiling magician Robert Gallup. A few breaths later, three ropes turned into one.

Robert Gallup, an American escape artist who has created his own brand of high risk illusion and escape acts, came to Beijing Yucai School Wednesday afternoon to promote his tour in China next year benefitting the Spring Bud Plan for China Children and Teenagers' Fund.

"You are very fortunate children. You have the opportunity to go to school. But in China, over one million children cannot go to school or have to drop out of school," Gallup told his audience of over 200 children. Among those forced to abandon their education, 70% to 80% are girls. He called on the media and everyone present to help these girls go back to school.

"You don't have to risk your lives," Gallup said. All people have to do is donate 400 yuan for one girl to study for a whole year in primary school.

Gallup, however, will risk his own life in an all-new show this weekend.

"I'm going to do another escape challenge this Saturday," he said. He will wear a steel jacket, shackled and chained at the hands and ankles, before being thrown into a deep pool.

"It's a very dangerous escape. I've never done it before. There are over 50 pounds of chains and locks. If I don't get out, I'll drown," Gallup said.

Gallup admitted that the day's show was just a taster, and that some of the children in the back missed seeing the tricks up close. However he promised to stage a spectacular show in Beijing's Great Hall of the People next spring, for everyone.

Like a Virgin

By Chen Ying

Beijing Bayin Cosmetics Company, a wholesale company, stole the spotlight at the China International Cosmetics, Beauty and Hair Exhibition 2002 on December 5-7 as it promoted two eye-catching products, an injection to induce vaginal contraction and an artificial hymen, according to the *Beijing Morning Post*.

The advertisement was placed in the entrance of the exhibition hall, even though the

stand was buried way in the back.

"No surgery required, just a few injections will do. Your innocence will be restored one month later... and last for the next ten years," said the manager of the company, surnamed Wang, as he showed the box of injections to visitors.

Of course, he didn't hesitate to recommend the artificial hymen to his on-looking potential retailers and clients, informing them that the fake virginal membrane was made from a kind of protein mixed with pigment.

"Actually, customers can install it themselves. But you can earn some extra profit by

Heeding the Call of Nature

Administration permits students to go to restroom during class

By Chen Ying

A new ruling by the Ministry of Education issued at the beginning of last month came as sweet relief to students nationwide.

The document stipulates that students have the right to go to the restroom during class. It may seem like an unnecessary step, but the ruling comes in the wake of a series of tragic accidents around the country caused by students waiting to go to the bathroom.

On October 30, around 700 students swarmed the stairs after class in the Zhongduo Middle School in Youyang County, Chongqing Municipality. Forty-five were injured and five died in the crushing crowds. Similar tragedies took place in Fengzhen, Inner Mongolia on September 23 and Chengde, Hebei Province on October 9.

In the new document, the Ministry of Education requires all schools to adopt measures to prevent such events from happening again. The fourth item of the document reads that students must be permitted to go to the restroom during lessons in order to avoid overcrowding after class. The ruling continues that schools can stagger class times to avoid overcrowding of halls and facilities.

Since the Ministry's document came out, the Hubei Education Department has already carried out the called for regulations. However, some teachers in Shanghai have expressed doubts about the new rule, according to a report in the *Shanghai Morning Post* on November 19.

"We don't want students to go to the restroom during class, but if they really have a pressing need, we will give them permission," said a teacher surnamed Li, from the Caoguangbiao Primary School in Shanghai. The school runs short courses for new students, explaining that going to the bathroom is the first thing they should do during their breaks. According to Li, grade one students often need to go to the bathroom during classes, but far fewer do so after one semester in school, and almost no students do so after entering grade three.

Is it reasonable for students to be excused to relieve themselves during class? Opinions follow:

Zhou Zhicheng, journalist, *China Youth Daily*

Though it was never a real regulation, many primary schools and middle schools were strict about not allowing students to go to the bathroom during lessons. So, kids had to hold on until the end of class in all but the most extreme situations. Why didn't they dare tell their teachers? Because they

worried that their teachers would grill them about what they did while out of the classroom in front of their classmates.

Kids' bodies work differently from those of adults, who probably wouldn't need to go to the bathroom over a 45-minute period. Students should be allowed to go to the bathroom for whatever reason, such as if their stomachs hurt or if they are in a bad mood. Traditional ideas emphasize that children should carefully pay attention in their lessons, but that leaves little room for compassion towards kids.

Administrators may worry that some 'bad students' will use going to the bathroom as an excuse to skip class. That is a worry based on a fundamental distrust of students. Though no one would assert that truancy does not happen, the possibility of students getting away with doing this are so slim that they are negligible. As teachers, they should believe that permitting students going to the restroom will not effect students' studies or class order.

The reason that the Ministry of Education passed this regulation is to prevent more tragedies from happening. We have to admit that students would still have to hold it in if there weren't so many accidents recently. But the real reason for allowing students to go during class is that schools will provide more humane environments for children's healthy growth.

Ma Biao, teacher in Beijing Primary School

Teaching reform has been carried

out nationwide. The concept of respecting the development of students' characters is popular among teachers now, at least in some large cities. Teachers severely punishing students for mistakes has become rare, though it is necessary to criticize students sometimes. But, that doesn't mean teachers should abandon their role as 'shapers of the soul' and let students do whatever they want.

The key lies in teachers' instruction. Going to the restroom during class is probably improper in the minds of many Chinese. If teachers in Hubei abide by this regulation blindly, some students may abuse the rule to get out of class when they don't need to. That will disrupt class order and the effectiveness of teachers' lessons.

However, I believe this quandary can be easily solved by having teachers first give reasonable statements to their classes, such as 'pretending to need to go to the restroom shows disrespect to your teachers, and staying out of class for a long time will affect the quality of your education.' Today's students are precocious. They will accept reasonable explanations if given them by teachers.

Song Lianhe, father

School is not military camp or prison. Kids should be able to go to the restroom whenever they want since they don't have the same degree of self-control as adults.

This really has to do with teaching methods. Teachers should create positive environments for children to learn,

but not enough has been done along those lines so far. I think the following conclusion is right to some extent — Chinese children grow up through learning while American kids grow up through playing.

Zheng Shanshan, grade two middle school student

Going to bathroom is a normal physical requirement in a human being's daily life. If people, especially children, try to hold it in, it can be harmful to their health.

But in reality, most students raise their hands when they can't stand it any more. I also don't think doing that will affect teachers' teaching. It's just like some students asking questions during lessons.

Matsue Naoko, Japanese, mother

I think there is no need to make this a regulation, since everyone has to listen to the call of nature sometimes. Maybe Chinese students don't dare make requests because they are afraid of their teachers.

My daughter, a grade three primary school student, rushes over to teachers she really likes when she sees them. That might seem strange to passers-by, but I think teachers like it after they get used to it.

Of course, respect should always be there. As a parent, I never criticize teachers in front of my children. And that's why I don't like students chewing gum all day in school, like a scene from some American soap opera.

Brianne Stuart, American

In the US, when a child needs to go to the bathroom in a class, they can simply raise their hand and ask the teacher. Usually they are accompanied by a fellow classmate for the sake of safety.

Whether a student can go to the bathroom depends on the policy of each individual teacher. They decide whether or not to let kids go to the bathroom. But it's important to let younger kids go because they don't have full control over their bladder. There are even bathrooms inside classrooms in some primary schools.

I think the document issued by the Ministry of Education might be a good idea for primary school students. But in middle schools, students should take responsibility for going to the bathroom before class. If they don't, they simply have to hold it in. That was the policy of my middle school teachers.

Students where I come from were never embarrassed when they needed to go to the bathroom.

SOUND BITES

"Wuxia (*martial arts literature*) is a fantasy world that exists in the mind. Sometimes you will find that transforming your fantasy into reality is very enjoyable but is also hard to do."

— Zhang Yimou, Chinese movie director, whose first *wuxia* movie, *Hero*, will debut tomorrow in the Great Hall of the People

"In traditional schools, most girls tend to cower behind the boys in science classes. We're all more active now and do not have to worry about losing face in front of boys."

— Wang Juan, a student at the Beijing Experimental High School for Girls, one of the three all-girl schools in the city

"When the government and the opposition talk about 'the people', they are referring to the sector of the population that is on their side, and the absence of agreements is fanning the flames of the violence."

— Carlos Correa, the head of Provea (Venezuelan Program of Education—Action on Human Rights) which has stated the polarization between supporters and foes of President Hugo Chavez poses a threat to human rights in Venezuela, and has resulted in at least 71 deaths since the last quarter of 2001

"Everyone knows that North Korea has been exporting missiles, and the real question is what the United States has in mind in the interception of the ship. As long as this ship did not carry missiles bound for Iraq, and as long as it was not carrying any long-range missiles, I don't think this episode will explode into a major security crisis."

— Lee Jong-sok, a security expert in Seoul's independent Sejong Institute, regarding the Spanish navy's stopping of a ship sailing without a flag showing national origin but appeared to have a North Korean crew, during interdiction operations off the coast of Yemen as part of the US-led war on terrorism. The ship was carrying North Korean-built Scud missiles

"Our avowed goal is to advance science. For any group to stay out of the action and wait for someone else to do it because of political reasons is wrong."

— Irving Weissman, medical professor at Stanford University, who will direct the school's plan to develop human embryonic stem cells through nuclear transfer technology, becoming the first US institution of higher education to publicly embrace an effort many look at as cloning humans

By Chen Ying

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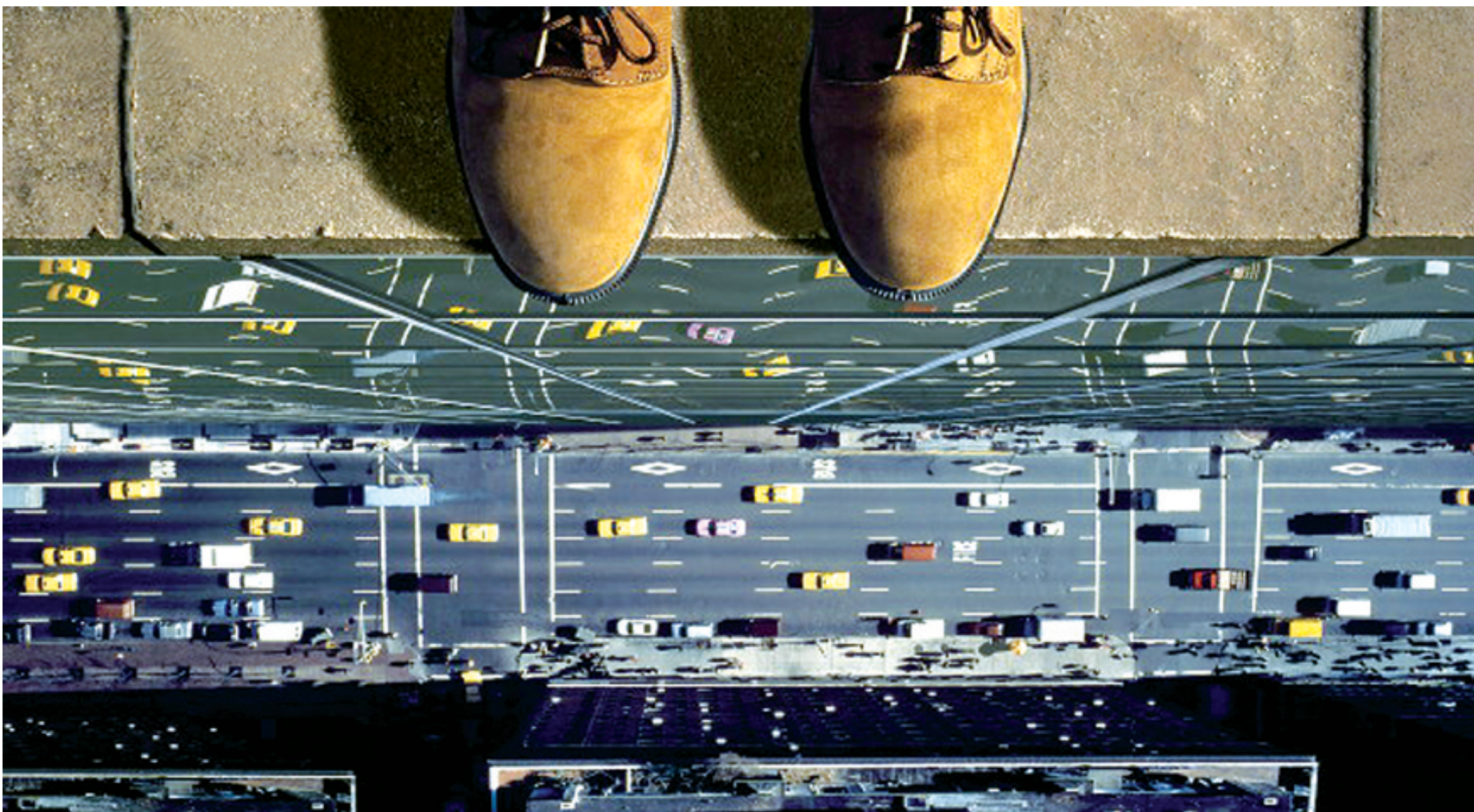
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“No spontaneous act of desperation”

By Su Wei

Some eulogies are harder to write than others. Suicide claims 28,700 lives per year in China, or 3.6 percent of all national deaths. It is the leading cause of death among young people, accounting for 19 percent of all deaths of those aged between 15 and 34. Every year, 2 million Chinese attempt suicide.

“Suicide has become a serious public-health problem in China,” says Michael Phillips, director of the Beijing Suicide Research and Prevention Center at Beijing Huilongguan Hospital, in a 7-year study on suicide risk factors in China conducted by the center, just published last week.

After interviewing family members of 519 people who committed suicide all over China, he identified eight suicide risk factors: high depression symptoms; previous suicide attempt; low quality of life; high chronic stress; acute stress at time of death; severe interpersonal conflict in the two days preceding death; a blood relative with previous suicidal behavior; a friend or associate with previous suicidal behavior.

Fate of rural women

Li draws attention to the particularly high suicide rate of Chinese women, which is 25 percent higher than that of men. This is due to the overwhelming proportion of rural women who commit suicide out of isolation and despair.

“Women believe it is the last but most effective resort to protest or to escape the unbearable reality,” she says. “This is especially true for women who are kidnapped, sold, or forced into an arranged marriage by their families.”

Zhang Yanping, vice director of the center, adds that young women in rural areas are traditionally forced to bear and raise at least one child until they have a son, to engage in hard agricultural labor, and to support the elderly in-laws.

“They are all the more vulnerable when they feel abandoned by their husbands,” says Zhang. “In the name of love, sometimes death is the only happy ending.”

Disillusion and disappointment

Wang Yongshun, a 68-year-old father in Beijing’s Haidian District, still cannot understand why his daughter committed suicide six years ago. “After she failed to be promoted in her job, she became very depressed and blamed herself severely,” recalls Wang.

“I told her that the promotion meant nothing, that her family only wanted her to live a happy life. But she refused to accept any consolation. The more he tried to comfort her and persuade her to face reality, the more she felt his words were unjust and questioned her own

value as a human being in society.

Li points out that no matter how many risk factors influence those people who commit suicide, the key one is their failure to adjust to society. “The problem is that they foster the hope of changing their current conditions in the wrong way,” she says.

“The more easily they are satisfied with themselves and society, the less likely they are to attempt suicide,” she claims.

“People with high expectations of themselves and society are most susceptible to feel socially rejected or neglected. They want to stay in control of themselves and their environment, but once they fail, they suffer from lack of confidence or satisfaction with themselves and lose faith in society.”

She believes many young adults are simply incapable of adjusting to a rapidly changing world. “Because their capacity to analyze situations is still immature, their personalities are often unstable, and they are more vulnerable to feelings of disorientation and helplessness in an unstable society. All this uncertainty can give them a very pessimistic attitude towards life.”

Rich and poor alike

Although 84 percent of those studied live in rural areas, while the rural suicide rate is three times higher than the urban suicide rate, Zhang Yanping says that results do not point to any direct relation between suicide and economic condition.

She says city-dwellers, even well-off and with high social status, are no less at risk than poor people when exposed to the same degree of pressure or with the same inability to cope with difficulties.

“Just as workers are unable to accept a lower standard of living after being laid off, white-collars cannot accept their own inability to fulfill their goals,” says Zhang.

Bai Fan, 40, a government official, concludes that it was high self-expectations that led his wife, a former project assistant in a foreign company, to commit suicide.

“She once told me that her goal was to have 1 million yuan in savings, to live in a villa and to drive a Toyota,” he says. “But when her company began to lay-off staff after the recession of the world economy, she worried that she would be the next victim. She told me that human relations in her company were complicated, that working there had become ‘a fight’.”

Bai recalls the shock of all those who later learned of her suicide. “They didn’t understand why she had been so sensitive. They believed she should have been happy that she herself was in no danger of poverty.”

He says their bank savings amounted to hundreds of thousands of yuan and that they had just bought an apartment when his wife committed suicide.

Zhang says it is common for people to experience a sense of defeat when they must face the often disenchanting reality of their actual potential. “But for people like Bai’s wife, the longer they live privileged lifestyles, the more they become disillusioned, and the more psychologically tortured they end up.”

She admits that contemporary society gives them no slack, and forces them to struggle and compete. “These people are always worried about peer competition, even if they are satisfied with their current status,” says Zhang. “They are preoccupied with their material possessions and social rank. They pursue a distorted satisfaction, a material life with a spiritual vein.”

Suicide culture

Li Xianyun observes that China’s high suicide rate is linked to that Chinese tolerance of suicide. “Many stories and idioms feature people committing suicide, promoting the idea of dying for a just cause,” she says. “Although society has evolved, traditional ideas are still strong and penetrate into various aspects of daily life.”

Shen Yufeng, from Qinhuangdao, Hebei province, says that when her nephew killed himself with rat poison

five years ago, no one in their village blamed him for ending his life, although they agree it was a pity to die at the age of 26.

She says the reason her nephew committed suicide was that he was tortured by the idea of leaving his pregnant wife and aged parents to earn money as a construction worker in Beijing.

Shen says the following year, three or four young wives of the same village also committed or attempted suicide when their husbands chose to leave their hometown for work.

Li says committing suicide is not just an individual affair but a social phenomenon, for “at least 5 people are affected by one person committing suicide. Experiencing a person’s suicide firsthand has a significant impact on their own capacity to deal with pressure and the decisions they make when contemplating suicide themselves.”

In her opinion, committing suicide is not a cowardly act. “There is no denying that committing suicide requires a certain amount of courage. When talking about someone who has committed suicide, sympathy often comes before blame. Also from a human standpoint, every person has the right to decide for themselves whether to live or to die.”

Zhang Yanping says the fast pace of contemporary society gives Chinese people less time to care for others, and increased awareness of rights to privacy also result in people being less curious about others. “It doesn’t mean people have become more cold. They still wish everyone a happy life. But applying this wish to their own lives, some of them reach the conclusion that they would be happier dead.”

She says that the Chinese nature of being timid and saving face, not admitting one’s difficulties or personal suffering, is also conducive to suicide. “If those who committed suicide had just once talked about it with someone else, they might still be alive today,” she sighs.

Heavy depression

Although the research reveals only 63 and 42 percent of those studied suffered respectively from mental illness and depression, compared with an average of 90 percent for each in western countries, the risk of suicide for these people is estimated much higher.

“Of about 30 million psychologically depressed people in China, little over 5 percent have taken or take medical treatment,” says Zhang Yanping.

Wu Shujuan, a peasant in Changping District, committed suicide five years ago. “She had no interest in life at all,” recalls her husband, Tian Yongli, 38. “I even suspected she was in love with another man, because no matter how beautiful the clothes I bought for her, or how delicious the food I cooked, she re-

sponded coldly.”

He regretted not having recognized her depression until she was clinically diagnosed at Beijing No.6 Hospital six months before she committed suicide.

Zhang says that like Wu and his wife, most people do not know that depression is a mental illness.

“They dismiss symptoms such as bad mood and lack of interest in life, believing them to be only temporary symptoms of stress and pressure,” says Zhang. “Even those aware of their illness are unwilling to seek professional assistance for fear of offending their family.”

She suggests that social discrimination towards people with mental illness prevents them from being properly informed, resulting in another high suicide risk.

She says that without timely treatment, these people tend to regard death as the only escape from a violently turbulent society. For them, suicide is not a spontaneous act of desperation, but a carefully thought out solution. “For them, committing suicide is like executing a plan,” she concludes.

Li points out that irresponsible media coverage of suicidal deaths has a powerful impact on public attitude. Front-page “news” of suicides transform the incident into a spectacular affair, but neglect to inform people about how to seek help while there is still hope. “In these conditions, the whole society is at risk,” says Li.

Extreme personalities

Lin Ping, a middle school student in Chaoyang District, jumped from a six-story building four years ago. Her parents admit the reason is that she failed in a national writing competition.

“All her teachers and classmates believed she would win the prize,” says her mother. “When she failed, we did not blame her, but she told me she felt ashamed of herself and ‘guilty’ towards the school.”

Li says people like Lin with extreme personalities are often paranoid, with an inflated sense of personal dignity or a severe inferiority complex. “These people habitually set unrealistic goals for themselves. But when they fail to achieve these goals, they refuse to be regarded as a failure and avoid social contact. They lock themselves into depression and desperation.”

She says although the study does not focus on the relationship between personality and suicide, people with more extreme personalities are more likely to commit suicide.

“It is characteristic of these personalities to act irrationally and impulsively. They may just want to remind people of their existence,” says Li.

Photo / Tony Stone

‘ There is no denying that committing suicide requires a certain amount of courage. When talking about someone who has committed suicide, sympathy often comes before blame. Also from a human standpoint, every person has the right to decide for themselves whether to live or to die. ’

— Zhang Yanping, vice director of the Beijing Suicide Research and Prevention Center



Two families getting involved: (from left to right) Sun Chao, Li Aiye, Sun Huadong, Zhao Shengqiang, Gong Ke and Zhao Da.

Photo by Xu Jiajun

Honey, They Swapped the Kids

Twenty-one years after their sons were born, two families have discovered they were given the wrong babies. They are now suing the hospital for more than 3.6 million yuan.

Hearings concluded last week at Dongchang District Court in Tonghua city, Jilin Province, but the verdict has not yet been announced.

Last year, a couple in Tonghua city named Zhao Shengqiang, the husband, and Gong Ke, the wife, found their son Zhao Da was not their own after a blood test. They later found out that on the day Zhao Da was born, a total of eight baby boys were born at Tonghua People's Hospital.

DNA tests revealed Zhao and Gong's real son: Sun Chao, the son of another couple at the hospital, Sun Huadong, the husband and Li Aiye, the wife.

However, Zhao Da was found to have no blood bond with any of the four adults, which means at least one more family was involved in the accident. The search for Zhao's real family has begun, leaving the families facing some awkward issues.

A simple mistake...

Zhao Da, 21, is a computer student at Jilin University. When he went to donate blood last year, the test showed his blood type was AB. But the blood type of both his parents is B.

His father, Zhao Shengqiang, was immediately suspicious. Zhao and his wife suddenly had the terrible thought that the hospital might have mixed up the babies. They decided to look into the matter without telling Zhao Da anything about it.

Their first stop was the hospital. They wanted to check the files but were told the file was unavailable as the file room had been destroyed by a flood in 1988.

Then they went to the police and found out a total of 39 babies were born on October 29, 1981 in Tonghua city.

According to the addresses provided by the police, the couple searched the whole city and asked about which babies were born in Tonghua People's Hospital. Last fall, they found out that eight baby boys had been born at the hospital that day.

Gong Ke thought of the woman whose bed had been next to hers in the hospital, Li Aiye.

Who do you think you are?

On October 29, 1981, Gong Ke and Li Aiye moved into the patient's room in the gynecology and obstetrics department, Tonghua People's Hospital. Gong's bed number was 7 while Li's was 8.

As the two couples had got married on the same day and stayed in the same hospital room, they became good friends.

On the morning of October 29, Li Aiye gave birth to a baby boy while late that night Gong also had a son. The two babies were taken to the nursery ward right away after they were born.

A few days later, the two families left the hospital and named their sons Zhao Da and Sun Chao.

At present, Zhao Da is in Jilin University while Sun Chao is in Jiangnan University in Wuxi, Jiangsu Province.

When Gong He went to visit Li Aiye, she looked at the photos of Sun Chao. She noticed Sun Chao bore an uncanny resemblance to her husband. She then told Li the purpose of her visit.

Li said Sun Chao used to have a bleeding nose when he was a kid. Gong's husband Zhao Shengqiang has a family history of the same complaint. As the two mothers discussed the personality and characters of the two boys, the truth became clear.

Test result

On December 6 last year, Zhao and his wife made a trip to Jiangnan University. In the morning, they waited outside the dorm watching students trickle out. When a thin and tall boy came out,

Gong Ke recognized her real son.

Gong said her head was numb when she saw Sun Chao. She felt no happiness or sadness and lost herself until the boy walked out of sight.

After getting back home, Gong thought a lot. One is her real son and the other is the son she raised for 21 years. What should she do?

Gong and Zhao decided to reveal what had happened to Zhao Da. They also gave him a house worth 1.5 million yuan.

"I didn't want him to move out," Zhao stresses. "We just wanted him to understand that although he is not our real son, our love towards him would not be less than before. Instead, we would give him more care and love."

On February 4, all six members of the two families came to Liaoning Criminal Science and Technology Institute based in Shengyang for DNA tests.

The test result came out three days later. Sun Chao is the real son of Zhao and Gong. But Zhao Da has no blood relationship to any of the four adults.

Now what?

After the test, Zhao Da had mixed emotions. But eventually he said to Gong Ke, "You will always be my mom."

"But where are my real parents? Who are they? What do they do? What do they look like? If I don't find out, it will be a great regret in my life," he continued in a sad tone.

Knowing he is not the real son in the family, whenever Sun Chao comes around, Zhao Da finds an excuse to go out.

It is also hard for Sun Chao and Li Aiye to accept the truth. The mother and son held each other crying after learning the truth.

For Sun Huadong and Li Aiye, there is a long way to go before they find their real son. According to the hospital's policy back then, babies had to stay in the nursery ward for three days before being taken back to their parents.

This means Sun and Li will have to look through all the babies born between October 27 and 31 in the hospital. Zhao Da faces the same situation in finding his parents.

Also, as there were eight boys born that day in the hospital, at least one other family has the wrong baby.

Though Zhao's family is united, the couple is not happy because Zhao Da's real parents and Sun and Li's real son are still missing.

Zhao Da and Sun Chao still live with their families as before. But they know it will never be the same as before.

"The past is gone. We will never have the chance to taste the happiness of seeing our own son grow up. Who is responsible for this regret we suffer?" Gong Ke asked. "Also, we feel upset when seeing the son we brought up looking sad and not knowing where his real parents are."

Hospital says sorry

As to the responsibility, a senior person at the hospital who refused to give his name said the hospital bore full responsibility and that loopholes in the management of the hospital caused the accident.

But he also stressed that the tragedy happened 21 years ago and that the hospital is under great pressure. It must take responsibility for the two families but also has a responsibility for the more than 800 staff.

According to a *Beijing Evening News* report dated December 6, an unidentified spokesman for the hospital said the incident had had a serious effect on the hospital. Now there are hardly any patients in the gynecology and obstetrics department. "Although this happened 21 years ago, it will teach us a good lesson," he said.

Edited by Ivy Zhang

Sources: *Beijing Daily*, *Beijing Evening News*, *China News Service*



Photos by Qu Liyan

Exposing China's Environmental Problems

Black spade

In Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, many sweet potato processing companies have popped up in recent years in the poverty stricken area of Xihai, turning it into the largest starch production base in China.

An unfortunate side-effect of all this production is the huge quantities of waste water discharged into the Xiazhai water reservoir nearby, polluting hundreds of hectares of fields around it.

Duan Weiguo, a farmer in Xiazhai village said that when a spade is dipped in the polluted water it will turn black. In 1997, he grew crops on 0.15 hectares of land and watered the field with water from the reservoir. The crops soon died. Since then, no locals have used the land around the reservoir.

Tibetan antelope hunted illegally

The Tibetan antelope, the so-called plateau spirit, lives in the uninhabited Kekexili region in Tibet and is listed in China as a class one rare wild animal.

Fifty years ago, there were about one million Tibetan antelopes in Kekexili but they have been brought to the brink of extinction by years of poaching.

From 1990 to 1998, about 20,000 Tibetan antelopes were shot. Tibetan antelope products sell for a high price in the international market. The price tag for a Tibetan antelope shawl ranges from US\$11,000 to US\$40,000.

There are now only about 50,000 Ti-



betan antelopes left. The Chinese authorities took action against the illegal hunting in 1999.

There are now natural protection zones staffed with people to look after the animals. These efforts appear to be helping as Tibetan antelopes can now be seen along the Qinghai-Tibet highways.

Vanishing into the sand

Duolun County in Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region used to be one of the most fertile grasslands in China. But in the past 70 years, due to overgrazing and unplanned cultivation, the problem of desertification has become severe.

Nowadays, the county is largely covered by three sand belts that are moving towards Beijing 180 kilometers away at the rate of 3.5 kilometers per year. The elevation of Duolun is more than 1,000 meters higher than that of Beijing. Whenever the wind blows, the sand pours down into the capital. Thus it is said that eight out of every ten grains of sand in Beijing come from Duolun County.

Shabuleng village in Duolun County still has more than 40 households but the village is fighting a losing battle with the encroaching sand. Every time the wind blows, people have to come out afterwards and clear away the sand dunes heaped in their courtyards.

Villager Yin Xiuying, 83, said that a few years ago the sand was not such a serious problem. But now, crop fields in the village are covered with yellow grit. The rich grass of the surrounding pastures has all but vanished.

Choked by smoke

Standing in No. 78 building in a residential complex in Tangshan, Hebei Province, one wall away from Tangshan Coking Plant, black, yellow and white smoke can be seen rising from the plant.

When the south wind blows, smoke blankets the entire residential area. Visibility is sometimes less than 10 meters. Residents must keep their windows closed to avoid the choking pollution.

Many kids in the area have chronic bleeding noses and many residents suffer from cancer, pneumonia and skin diseases.



It's a result of the upgrading project at the plant in 1996. Gas cleaning equipment was not installed. Tangshan Municipal government recently made a big investment to tackle this problem.

By Ivy Zhang

The photos, big or small, hung on the walls in the spacious exhibition hall do not reveal the beauty of nature. They focus on the human capacity to destroy it.

Named Song of Nature, the China Environmental Warning Photo Exhibition running from December 6 to 15 at the Military Museum is staging a collection of photos taken by Chinese journalists who participated in the 10-year-old China Environmental Protection Century Tour.

Launched in 1993 and organized by 14 government ministries including the People's Congress Environment and Resources Commission and the State Environmental Protection Administration, the tour drew about 50,000 journalists who between them published 150,000 news pieces on environmental protection in China. There's no shortage of material.

"Some problems have been solved and some are being solved," the red board standing at the entrance of the hall reads, "but we expose the problems with only one purpose. We hope these things will never happen again."

People trickle in and out, most with a grave expression on their faces. No smiles, no laughter, they are stunned by what they see.

"I felt very upset after seeing all the photos," said He Shuilian, a young woman who runs a laundry in Fengtai district. "Every piece represents a call from the heart of the photographer. They are all impressive and touching."

He said she likes to write articles about the environment in her spare time and hopes she can have the chance to do something to help the cause.

"My home is in Chengde, Hebei where the Chao River originates. The river there is clear. But there is also a river next to the house I rent now. It is extremely dirty with waste paper and garbage flowing down it. There used to be a vegetable garden by the side of the river and it was green last year. But it turned into a waste collection post this year. And the air is smelly."

"Nothing is more pressing than environmental problems. If I had the chance, I would give up my laundry business and dedicate myself to waking people up to the way they're destroying the environment," said He.

Venue: 2nd floor, West Hall, China Military Museum, west Chang'an avenue

Time: 8:30 to 4:30, December 6 - 15

Language: Chinese only
Admission: Free of charge

There's No Stopping Grandma

By Zhao Pu

Youth is not a time of life; It is a state of mind; It is not a matter of rosy cheeks, red lips and supple knees; It is a matter of the will, a quality of the imagination, a vigor of the emotions; It is the freshness of the deep springs of life.

— Samuel Ullman, *Youth*

In the west there are beauty competitions and talent shows. A peculiar Chinese variant is the "image championship" where anyone, young or old, cute or not so cute, can impress the audience with a performance of any kind. For one 80-year-old grandma, reciting the poem above was the clincher in the Beijing round of the Third TV Image Championship last month.

"That was the best performance I've seen in my life; you deserve every bit of this applause!" Renowned actress Xie Fang could hardly restrain herself as she handed Song Shuru the cup.

Song's deep emotion and accurate pronunciation greatly impressed the audience. The 80-year-old won the heart of all the judges and now hopes to do the same at the final competition in Xi'an.

Never mind the wrinkles

"Being image champion is not simply about physical youth and beauty, it's more about spiritual vigor and exuberance," Song Shuru explains. "I chose this poem because it best translates my state of mind and attitude towards life."

Song is the oldest competitor in the image championship. She defeated 100 other Beijing competitors, aged from four to seventy, and won the right to compete in the national image championship in Xi'an.

Song is an ordinary retired senior citizen living at Sanlihe in Xicheng District. She worked as an English editor in the Chinese Academy of Sciences for over fifty years. After that, Song stayed at home but found she was still restless. So she took part in various community activities and attended a number of competitions.

She heard about the TV image championship from one of her friends who had also entered the competition. "She

told me there was no age limit for the applicants. Though I'm very old, I look young and healthy, especially when I am performing on a stage, I love the stage!" she says. "So I gathered my courage and signed in with my friend," says Song.

In the one-week "beauty contest", the competitors were tested both physically and mentally. They presented their talent in singing, dancing and performing. They were asked to answer questions in Chinese and English. It was tough going for Song as she could hardly read the written questions on the TV screen and had difficulty hearing.

Nevertheless, Song made it. "The highlights of my presentation were that poem and a dancing part," smiles the grandma. Her dance, *Sugercoated Hawstick*, was adapted from her morning exercise workout. What also impressed the audience was her bright smile. "She looks like a young girl with that big smile on her face," said Xue Jian, the organizer of the competition.

Grandma Song made some new friends at the competition. "I met a teacher who was performing as a model in the competition. She corrected my English pronunciation before the contest." After the competition, the telephone at Song's home buzzed constantly for two weeks. "I received about fifty calls congratulating me on winning the contest," she laughed. They were from her relatives and old friends.

The national championship will be held in Xi'an at the end of this month. Though there is still half a month to go, Song has already packed her luggage in which she gathered her favorite clothes and jewelry. She's obviously very excited to appear in the final, representing Beijing. "Am I confident? Sure!" she says. "Confidence is one thing, the result is another. But whatever you do, confidence is important."

Energetic grandma

Grandma Song lives with her son in a small apartment. Her husband and eldest daughter passed away many years ago. Her youngest daughter lives in Australia. Every morning, when her son goes to work, Song will go downstairs to meet her morning exercise team.

The team was organized by Song two years ago. At first, Song exercised alone in a



Rehearsal at home



Grandma Song proudly displays her jewelry.

Photos by Guo Tielin



Song leads her morning exercise team.



Song recieved about fifty calls congratulating her on winning the contest.

garden near her home. Some retired neighbors joined her in the mornings later and she taught them dancing and exercises.

Song was born in Shanghai in 1922. She moved to Beijing with her parents when she was three years old. Her parents encouraged her to study and supported her all the way to college. She majored in Chinese literature at Beijing Normal University. In 1942, she dropped out of school to get married. After that, she joined the Chinese Academy of Sciences and began half a century of loyal work there.

Song retired in 1986 but found she didn't enjoy a life of leisure. "I was too energetic to stay at home. I felt I could still do something for others, and for society," she says. "But who would employ a muddleheaded old woman? I remembered the small restaurant downstairs."



Wedding photo, 1942

Song went to the restaurant near her home to apply for a job. "I decided to work for them, without asking for any pay. I just wanted to be helpful." When she got there, the restaurant's owner was absent so she was asked to wait for a while. There was a young woman sitting beside her who was also looking for a job. "She told me she was a laid-off

worker. She was in her thirties, and she had to get a new job to support her child in school." Song said nothing and left. "I felt ashamed. There must be many laid-off workers like her. I can't compete with them."

She was a little disappointed but she volunteered in various community activities and attended many English and performance contests arranged by local governments and organizations. In last year's English speech contest organized by Xicheng District in supporting China's Olympics bid, Song won the first prize.

Touchstones in life

"I always believe hardships are touchstones for one's courage and personality. Cowards collapse in front of them; while warriors grow by them," she says.

The biggest blows in Song's

life were the death of her daughter and husband. "My daughter was like me in every way, not only looks, but also personality. When she was studying chemistry in Tsinghua University, everyone said she had a promising future as a scientist," Song says. Her daughter was even given a private laboratory in Tsinghua University. After graduation, she went into the domestic chemical industry. But she died early at the age of 42.

"It was in 1986. I could hardly accept it. The daughter that I loved best left me at such a young age. She still had so much to do in her life," says Song. "I was sad not just for losing a daughter, but for our nation losing a talented young scientist."

She flinched at the reality that her daughter had passed away and sank into deep depression. "I could not eat or sleep. Whenever I heard someone mentioning my daughter's name, I would burst into tears," she recalls. What's more, she turned to alcohol to ease the pain. "For a period of time, I gave up my life. It hurt my family."

As she was coming to terms with her daughter's death, another disaster rocked her family two years later. Song's husband died, due to a false diagnosis. "I forgave that young and inexperienced doctor. There was no use to fight with the hospital and destroy the future of the young doctor, he would repent the accident," says Song. This time, she restrained her sadness and learned to carry on.

She dried her tears and went back to work. "Work heals better than time," she smiles. "I made a promise to the memory of my daughter and husband that I would live a happy and healthy life. That, I believe was the best condolence to their souls."

Once in a Lifetime

Seventy-two of China's oldest, rarest and most valuable painting and calligraphy works are on show at the Shanghai Museum

By Iris Mao

An event such as this warrants, in fact demands, an excess of superlatives: 72 painting and calligraphy works from the 4th to the 14th century, a collection of some of the most important works of Chinese fine art, are on display at the Shanghai Museum. The works are from the collections of Beijing's Palace Museum (the Forbidden City), the Shenyang's Liaoning Museum and the Shanghai Museum. As an exhibition, it is unparalleled, unprecedented, and probably unrepeatable. But the level of excitement it has aroused in cosmopolitan Shanghai was still underestimated.

Shaped somewhat like an ancient bronze *ding*, with pigeons whirling around it, the Shanghai Museum looks like a Noah's Ark moored in the center of People's Square. Only people are being admitted, one by one, two by two, tens by tens, and everyone must pass through a security check, a measure never before considered necessary for an exhibition in a Chinese museum.

Tickets are limited for individual viewers to 2,000 per day, yet two hours before opening on the first day, a queue wound from the museum's south entrance right around to the north exit.

After passing through the security check, visitors have to queue again to get into the exhibition hall, as only 300 people are allowed inside at a time — a welcome restriction, once you are in, though it is still too crowded to really give these art works the attention they deserve.

Well-known scholar Fu Shen, from Taipei, says visitors to the exhibition are fortunate to be able to see each of these 72 works in one fell swoop, adding that he himself has traveled back and forth to the various galleries involved for almost twenty years, but up till now, has still missed a few.



Kusun Tie by Huai Su (725-785), collected by Shanghai Museum.

A history of art from the Jin to the Yuan Dynasty

The idea for the exhibition was first raised three years ago. The Forbidden City, the Liaoning Museum, and the Shanghai Museum boast China's greatest collections of ancient fine art works. "Both the Palace Museum and the Liaoning Museum agreed with us to hold such an exhibition for the first time at the Shanghai Museum," says Shan Guolin, director of the Shanghai Museum's Department of Painting and Calligraphy. The 28 pieces from the Palace Museum have never before been lent for exhibition, neither have the 18 from the Liaoning Museum.

While artistic value and rarity was the primary criteria for selection, it was the aim of the exhibition's curators to draw a family tree of the thousands of years of development of Chinese painting and calligraphy, giving the audience a general idea of the essence of different periods of history.

The exhibits occupy two halls on the museum's first and second floor. The first room starts with an anonymous hand scroll titled *Elegy of Cao E*, written during the Eastern Jin Dynasty (317-420), followed by *Shangyu Tie*, by Wang Xizhi, the "Saint Calligrapher," also from the Eastern Jin, then the earliest preserved landscape *Spring Outing* by Zhan Ziqian of the Sui Dynasty (581-618). A hand scroll of calligraphy in running script by Su Shi (1037-1101), one of the four masters of the Song Dynasty, concludes the first section of the exhibition.

The second room starts with *The Festival of Qingming on the Bian River* by Zhang Zeduan of the Northern Song Dynasty, followed by some of the most talented names of the Yuan Dynasty (1279-1368).

The popularity of individual exhibits depends less on artistic value than on whether it is featured in textbooks or not. Consequently the biggest crowds are usually in front of paintings such as the *Night Banquet*, by Gu Hongzhong (910-980), and *The Festival of Qingming on the Bian River*. **Questions unresolved**

Virtually all the works dating back to the Tang Dynasty or earlier have a question mark over them regarding the exact date, the artist, or whether they are an original, a replica, or a copy.

Art experts still dispute the authenticity of *Spring Outing* by Zhan Ziqian (circa 550-604), the oldest known landscape painting. On the silk mount-

ing, Song Dynasty Emperor Huizong (1082-1135) inscribed the name of the artist and the title of the painting, thus it is usually described as the only existing painting by Zhan in the records of the following dynasties. Yet according to the respected scholar Fu Xinian, the hats worn by figures in the painting and certain features of the architecture indicate it is a Song Dynasty copy of an earlier work. Connoisseur and collector Zhang Boju holds the view that it is indeed an original work by Zhan, while another scholar, Wang Qufei, has published a thesis arguing that the painting was done some time after the mid-Tang Dynasty (618-907).

There has been fierce debate among specialists from all over the world attending the symposium over the authenticity of three paintings attributed to Dong Yuan (?-circa 962), all bearing inscriptions by the great Qing Dynasty painter and connoisseur Dong Qichang. After examining the brushwork and silk used, Marc Wilson, director of the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, U.S., believes that the one titled *Waiting to Cross the River* is the only authentic work; yet well-known researcher Shan Guoqiang, from the Palace Museum, disputes Wilson's conclusion, declaring that *Xiaoxiang Tu* is the only authentic one among the three.

Should there be more such exhibitions?

The crowds queuing to get inside the museum is evidence of the charisma of traditional Chinese art. It is also an indication that exhibitions of this standard are too few and far between.

The frank statement by Hong Zaixin, assistant professor of art history at the University of Puget Sound in the US is representative of many who attended the symposium organized in conjunction with the exhibition. Though he is involved in research on ancient Chinese paintings, he says it is tremendously difficult to get to see the originals. Hong gave a ten-minute lecture during the symposium. "I submitted my thesis simply to see the paintings," admits Hong.

The silk or paper on which Chinese paintings are made, if properly preserved, could last for eight hundred to a thousand years. However, each folding and unfolding does a little damage over the years.

Meanwhile, for now, the Shanghai Museum is the only one in the Chinese mainland with temperature and humidity controlled exhibition rooms. In other words, such an exhibition could only be safely held in Shanghai.

To see *Boyuan Tie* by Wang Xun, one of Emperor Qianlong's favorite works, as well as works by Zhou Fang, who initiated a particular style of painting female figures and Buddha statues, Yan Liben (?-673), the great calligrapher Huai Su (725-785), Li Cheng (919-967), Cui Bai (1004- after 1088), Wang Shen (circa 1048-after 1104), Mi Fu (1051-1107), Zhao Ji, or Emperor Huizong (1082-1135), Qian Xuan (circa 1239- after 1299), Zhao Mengfu (1254-1322), Four Masters of the Yuan Dynasty (1127-1368), Wang Meng, Huang Gongwang, Ni Zan, and Wu Zhen, you have until January 6. The twenty or so days between now and then might be the only chance in the foreseeable future to see all those great names and their great works together.



Visitors waiting outside the museum.

Photo by Miao Yajie

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Mural Zone Under Renovation

By Zhao Pu

As Yuan Yunsheng, professor in the Oil Painting Department of the Chinese Academy of Fine Arts, attended an exhibition of national treasures in Shanghai last weekend, his heart remained in Beijing, anxiously awaiting the fate of his airport mural.

Last month, Yuan received a call from China Central Television. They had intended to film his mural *Water-splashing Festival* — *Paeon of Life* at Beijing's Capital International Airport for an art program, when they were told that the mural, created 23 years ago in Terminal 1 now under renovation, had been taken down.

What will become of this mural, one of the seven which inaugurated the renaissance of Chinese mural art in the late 1970s? The solemn news has raised anxiety among artists and Chinese art lovers alike.

Historical Renaissance

The 1980s are considered the renaissance period of Chinese mural art, as over one thousand murals were created in China in only ten years between 1979 and 1988. This revival was heralded by the seven murals drawn by eight renowned artists for Capital International Airport in October 1979, representing the first large-scale mural creation since 1949. Seven huge murals, including Yuan's *Water-splashing Festival*, celebrated the arrest of the Cultural Revolution's notorious Gang of Four.

It was not long before the series stirred up moral controversy. "It was my mural which caused the 'big trouble,'" says Yuan. He had painted three naked women at a time when nudity was still a public taboo. His bold trial provoked heated debate.

"People were rushing to the airport to see my controversial mural," Yuan recalls. A foreign media reporter described the phenomenon as a positive sign: "Nude women are beginning to appear on public walls in China, demonstrating real implementation of the open door policy."

Immediately after the murals were completed, Deng Xiaoping visited the airport and expressed his admiration for Yuan's masterpiece. Other state leaders, including Li Xian'an and Wang Zhen, also voiced their support for the artwork.

But public outrage resurfaced a few years later. "Some people even asked me to add pants on these naked women," says Yuan. The airport finally covered the offensive mural with a wooden board, keeping it under lock for the next ten years.



Yuan Yunsheng

Photo by Song Xi

Over-renovated, under-protected

In recent years, painful news of valuable murals destroyed in renovations of hotels and other institutions across the country have inflicted artists with open wounds. This time, the future of Capital Airport's original seven historic murals is at stake.

At the end of 1999, the airport's new Terminal 2 was opened to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the founding of New China. At the same time, its old Terminal 1 was closed for renovation. The complete renovation plan has yet to be decided, but airport sources say the murals have already been boxed up. "We spent 60,000 yuan to protect these murals, so they will certainly be on public view again in 2004, once the renovation is finished."

"But shouldn't they inform us beforehand? After all, we are the creators of these murals," says Yuan. According to the artist, special precautions must be taken to preserve the murals before removing them. "Each mural is composed of its own distinct materials; only its respective author knows the exact relationship between the individual mural and its adhering wall," says Yuan in frustration. Laws for the protection of murals in China fail to address the question of the mural's ownership.

Invaluable value

"Often people don't realize the true value of an artwork until after it's destroyed," says Yuan. How valuable are the airport



Water-splashing Festival — Paeon of Life, Yuan Yunsheng, 1979 (detail)

murals? "They are invaluable in terms of both historical and artistic significance," says another author of the airport murals, Yuan Yunfu.

First, they represented the launch of reform and open door policy on the national art scene. Second, they inaugurated the renaissance of Chinese mural art after several centuries of decline. Third, the eight creators of these murals are contemporary China's most outstanding artists.

In terms of market value, each mural is estimated at over 10 million yuan, including Yuan's 27-meter-long *Water-splashing Festival*, which took Yuan and his two assistants 10 months to complete.

The Chinese Mural Art Committee has been promoting the protection of murals through conferences for the past two years. "I think the problem is people's ignorance of the true value of art," says Li Huaji, deputy director of the committee. "Those who destroy these artistic treasures don't consider them as national possessions, but rather as belonging to their own institutions," he says.



Creation • Harvest • Rejoicing, Liu Bingjiang, 1982 (detail)

Recent Renovation Tragedies

More than 20 large-scale murals have been destroyed during the renovation of hotels and other buildings in recent years, according to Li Huaji, deputy director of the Chinese Mural Art Committee (CMAC).

In May 2000, Liu Bingjiang's mural masterpiece *Creation • Harvest • Rejoicing*, completed in 1982, was annihilated in the renovation of Beijing Hotel's east hall. "I felt as if my 18-year-old child had been murdered," said the old artist at a CMAC conference, as he shed bitter tears.

He will never forget his shock when he discovered the crumbling evidence: "I was guiding two visiting friends to Beijing Hotel especially to see the mural," recalls Liu. But just around the corner from the hotel, he stumbled on the scene of the crime. The entire east hall of the hotel, where his mural had stood for 18 years, had been dismantled.

"There was only a pile of tiles and bricks," he remembers in grief. The mural, another representative work of Chinese mural

renaissance, had been washed down by innocent fitment workers. Not one trace of it had survived the demolition.

Just last month, Qingchuan Hotel was brought to Wuhan Intermediate Court by four artists whose joint creation *Chibi Battle* had been destroyed during the hotel's renovation this summer. The 17-meter-long mural, completed in 1981, had been declared a representative piece of Chinese mural renaissance by *China Contemporary Art Volume* in 1997.

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Smell the *Fragrance*



Photo by Chen Shuyi

By Wang Chunzhu

Holding a tiny bowl with a colorful goldfish in it, the nine dancers stepped carefully towards the center of the stage. This was the opening of modern dance *Fragrance*, which was performed at Beijing Modern Dance Theatre last Friday and Saturday night.

There was no dazzling make up, nor were there any eye catching costumes. The only device the performers used was their body language, by which they interpreted the spirit of *Fragrance*: in the fierce competition of modern society, people can experience a progress from confusion and wonder to reflection, and finally to tranquility, if they abandon their pursuit of material gains.

"Only if we are willing to give up something, will we be able to regain tranquility, and then we'll sense the fragrance of life," says choreographer Gao Yan-jinzi, who was also one of the dancers in *Fragrance*.

Explaining the symbolism of goldfish, Gao said, "goldfish are so colorful that you can almost smell their fragrance, but they just keep swimming in the tiny bowl without any purpose."

Taming the Shrew, Student-style

By Jenny Wang

Last Friday night at Beijing Normal University, members of Beijing College Students' Theatre presented their interpretation of Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*.

The story of *The Taming of the Shrew* tells how a man succeeds in turning a troublesome girl into an obedient wife. The young performers' version of the classical drama was filled with humorous dialogue and vivid body language. It seemed the audience were particularly impressed when one of the play's scenes was enacted entirely in mime, with jazz played as the background music—it earned the biggest cheers during the performance.

Director Huang Ying, who is a postgraduate student in the Directing Department of the Central Academy of Drama, explained to *Beijing Today* why he preferred a flexible and humorous interpretation of the play. "*The Taming of the Shrew* deals with the relationship between men and women, and especially the unfair role imposed upon women by society," Huang said, "and I like to discuss such a heavy topic in a light tone."

Asked how he felt about working with amateur actors, the sparkle in his eyes was the sign of a director who was clearly enjoying his job. "Of course they lack certain skills compared with professional actors," he said, "but they are so sincere and full of passion. Maybe the whole performance is not perfect, but it is the freshness we should treasure," he added.



A scene from The Taming of the Shrew Photo by Sheng Cha

No Bounds for Violin Prodigy



Li Chuanyun (right) and Professor Dorothy DeLay

By Iris Miao

Ever since he became the youngest ever winner of the Wieniawski International Youth Competition in 1991 at the age of 11, violinist Li Chuanyun has attracted rave reviews and glowing comments. Judges at the Wieniawski competition called him "a wonderful musical genius". The criti-

cal response to his first album issued in China, *Prophetic Bird*, has been equally breathless.

"We regard Li Chuanyun in the same light as the Buddhists saw the Sarira discovered at Famen Temple, Xi'an. He will be a world class violinist in the future." This was the modest assessment of Wang Xiang, supervisor of the album at Poloarts Cultural Communication Co. Ltd, who signed the young violinist.

The 70 minute album has 17 pieces of music, including *Salut d'Amour*, *Theme and Remembrances* from *Schindler's List*, *Meditation*, *Ave Maria*, *Prelude and Allegro*, *Prophetic Bird*, and *Tzigane and Czardas*. Li displays his natural gift as well as his guidance from Dorothy DeLay and renowned violinist Itzhak Perlman at Julliard School of Music.

The comments made by Sunil Freeman from *The Washington Post* after a performance in Hong Kong by the then eight-year-old Li might still ring true: "The ghost of Fritz Kreisler might have smiled at Chuanyun Li's violin work. The young violinist isn't yet a Perlman, but he sailed through the dazzling work with pizzazz, earning his standing ovation."

A Sino-Korean Romance

By Wang Chunzhu

Love Without Any Regret, a romantic comedy produced jointly by Chinese Inner Mongolia Film Group Corporation and South Korean filmmakers, will add a special flavor to the next year's Valentine's Day.

The film tells a story of a warm-hearted matchmaker (played by Shin Eun-Gyeong) who helps a lot of young men and women to find love, but she fails to find a husband for herself. However, her life is totally changed when she sees a photo of a computer designer (played

by Jeong Jun-Ho) who is a new applicant at the marriage agency.

Since acting in *My Wife is a Gangster*, Shin Eun-Gyeong has become one of the hottest actresses in Southeast Asia, but this time she has to change from a ruthless gang leader into a gentle and lively girl. "It's my first movie after *My Wife is a Gangster*," she says, "and it's really a challenge for me".

Producer Sun Mingqiang told reporters that the film displays the colorful life of South Korean youngsters from the perspective of a marriage agency. Shooting will be wrapped up by the end of December, and the film will be released in South Korea, Hong Kong and the Chinese mainland on February, 14, 2003.

WORLDWIDE



Ashanti poses for photographers after receiving eight awards.

Ashanti Takes Home 8 Billboard Awards

R&B newcomer Ashanti made an impressive debut at the Billboard Music Awards, taking home eight awards Monday night while rap star Nelly won honors in six categories.

Ashanti, 22, was named the year's top female artist, R&B/hip-hop artist and female R&B/hip-hop artist. She also picked up awards for her single *Foolish*.

"It's definitely an honor," the singer said. "It took me such a long time to get to where I am. I'm just really blessed and thankful." (AP)



Rock legend Pete Townshend

Who Guitarist Townshend Is Going Deaf

Rock legend Pete Townshend is almost deaf after nearly 40 years of subjecting his ears to his own crashing guitar riffs with the British band The Who.

The Sun newspaper quoted Townshend on Tuesday as saying his hearing has worsened since the band's U.S. tour this year.

"The recent return to touring and to me playing electric guitar — albeit more quietly than in the 1970s — led to further deterioration of my hearing," the paper quoted Townshend, 57, as saying.

Townshend was a key member of The Who during their heyday in the 1960s and 1970s, when he was renowned for smashing his guitars during live stage performances. (Reuters)

Irish Eyes Smiling as Kelley Shops Pilot

David E. Kelley isn't wasting any time jumping back into the series development game.

While his Fox drama *Girls Club* failed to ignite much interest among viewers earlier this

fall, the Emmy-winning writer-producer of *Boston Public* and *The Practice* has already penned a pilot script for a new hourlong drama, and it's being shopped to potential network buyers for the 2003-04 season. Details are few, but insiders say it's a family drama built around an Irish-American clan. (Variety)

Broadway Abuzz as Baz Plots More Plays

La Boheme is just the beginning. Having won over the Broadway critics with his opera production, Baz Luhrmann is now set to direct two more theatre shows.

Next up for New York is a stage version of the Australian native's debut film, *Strictly Ballroom*, released Stateside in 1992.

"We've already done about six months' work on the show, including a workshop," Luhrmann said at Sunday night's opening for *La Boheme*.

As for the much-ballyhooed stage production of his Oscar-winning *Moulin Rouge* film, it is destined for Las Vegas. "It's going into a casino," the helmer revealed. (Variety)

London May Get More of Kidman's 'Theatrical Viagra'

Hollywood actress Nicole Kidman, gushingly described as "pure theatrical Viagra" after her first stage appearance in London four years ago, may return to the city to star in a new West End production next year.

Kidman is in negotiations with director Trevor Nunn to appear in Henrik Ibsen's *The Lady From the Sea* at the Almeida theater, theaterland sources say.

The flame-haired Australian has made no secret of her desire to return to the London stage where she won rave reviews—including the *Viagra* plaudit—for her sizzling performance in *The Blue Room* at the Donmar Warehouse in 1998. (Reuters)



Hollywood actress Nicole Kidman

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BEIJING TODAY
今日北京

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Equipped for Fun

By Huang Lisha

Though it started business only one year ago, seven Snowfavor chain stores are now open nationwide, making the company one of the top ski product retailers in China. All equipment in Snowfavor stores come from three brands, K2 (US), Briko (Italy), and Rossignol (France), the world's top-selling ski maker last year. Snowfavor offers Rossignol skis and snowboards, both in a wide range of styles, priced from 1,650 yuan to 5,330 yuan. Rossignol ski bindings, ski and snowboard boots, and ski poles are also available.

The K2 equipment on sale includes bindings, boots, outerwear, and ski bags. Snowfavor has the goods to deck out the biggest ski buff, with a wide range of goggles, helmets, waxes, tools and other goods, many from Briko, to make sure even professionals have all they need.

The company runs a website showing the locations of its stores and a full list of and information on products, even allowing customers to make their purchases online. The site is www.snowfavor.com, or you can write Snowfavor at info@snowfavor.com.

Where: Third Floor, South Building 1, Ciqikou Dadushijie, Chongwen District. **Open:** 9 am – 5 pm **Tel:** 6567 9726



Photo by Chen Shuyi

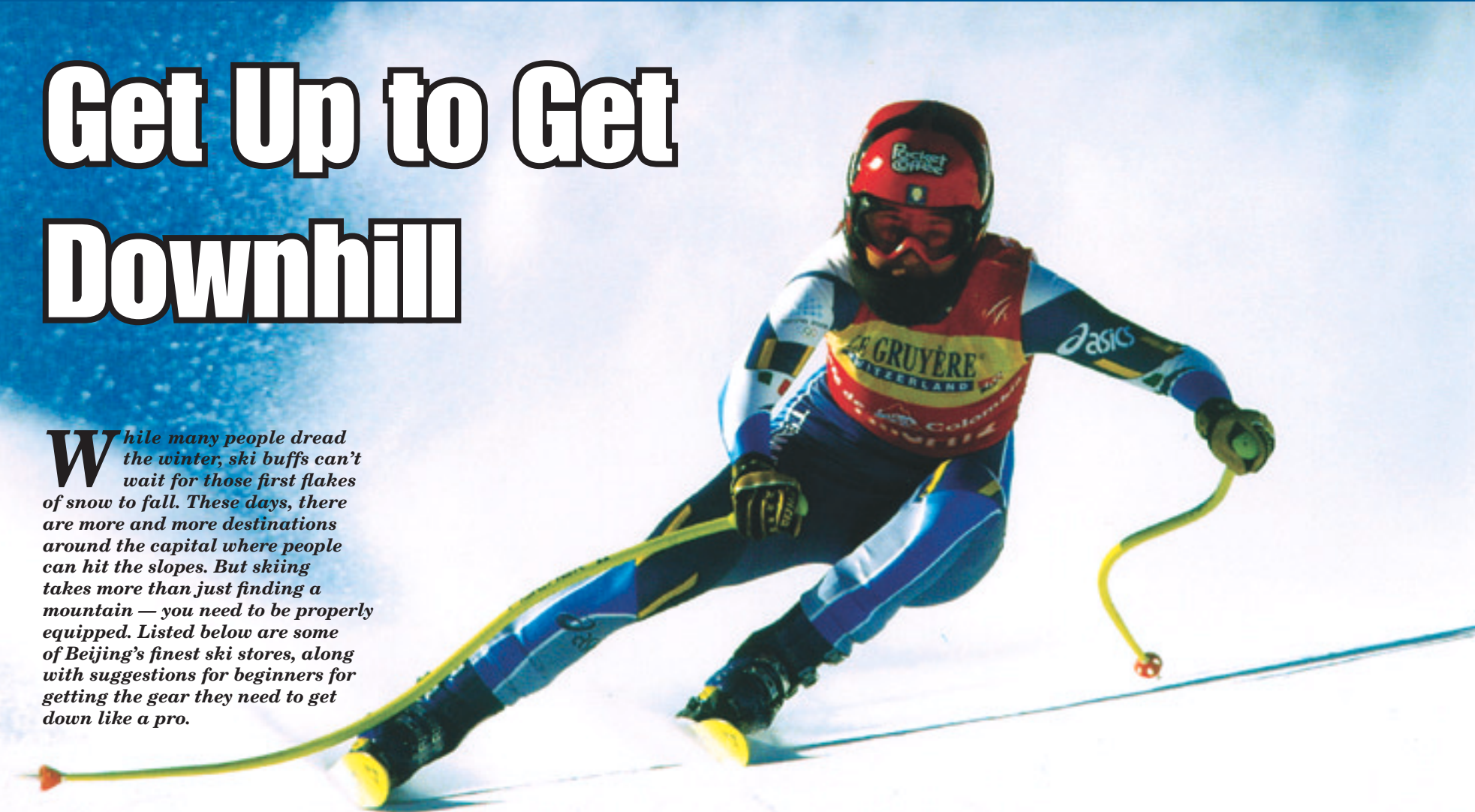
Finding That Swooshy Feeling

By Huang Lisha

Snowfeeling, a Sino-Swiss joint venture ski store, is the exclusive agent of Volkl and Toko, two of the world's most famous names in ski products, in the greater China market.

All the skis and snowboards available in Snowfeeling are made by Volkl, the chosen skis of three Olympic gold medallists and 14 world champions from 1998 to 2002. The store offers seven series of skis and bindings, including Supersport, Carver, Women, and Junior, each aimed at fulfilling the needs of different customers. The most expensive pair is the GS skis, which go for 5,400 yuan, but rest assured that much money will equip you like an Olympian.

Snowboards come in a range of nine categories, each available in different sizes and patterns, ranging in price from 1,100 to 3,900 yuan. Of these, the Future Series (3,100 yuan per board) is designed for children, as the board is wide enough that as children's feet



Get Up to Get Downhill

While many people dread the winter, ski buffs can't wait for those first flakes of snow to fall. These days, there are more and more destinations around the capital where people can hit the slopes. But skiing takes more than just finding a mountain — you need to be properly equipped. Listed below are some of Beijing's finest ski stores, along with suggestions for beginners for getting the gear they need to get down like a pro.

grow, the board can still fit them well for years. Snowfeeling also offers a wide spectrum of jackets, pants, poles and boots.

Another house specialty is Toko series wax, a favorite of professionals and avid skiers.

Besides selling equipment, Snowfeeling rents full collections of Volkl equipment from one day to several months. If interested, check the store's website at www.snowfeeling.com.cn.

Where: Third Floor, South Building 1, Ciqikou Dadushijie, Chongwen District. **Tel:** 6702 9508 **Open:** 9 am – 5 pm



Photo by Chen Shuyi

Getting Ahead on the Slopes

By Salinda

Ski buffs looking for the best in equipment should cruise over to Shiro Sports Articles, which carries goods from one of the world's top ski brands, HEAD. "The ski equipment we offer is at the top of the pyramid in terms of quality and contains lots of high technologies," says store manager Jeff Wang. "Many professional, top-100 skiers use HEAD equipment."

In skiing, safety is second only to fun, as shown in HEAD's special bindings that feature ABS

(anti-blocking system) and diagonal toe-pieces. Thanks to the ABS system, boots come free of the bindings with nearly no friction - even when bindings are covering in ice or grime. Thanks to a release range of 180 degrees, boots can be released from the bindings in any direction, reducing stress on knees and ligaments.

All that high technology comes at a price, though, as HEAD equipment is quite expensive. Whole sets generally range from 5,000 yuan to 10,000 yuan, so beginners may want to consider renting before purchasing their own gear of this quality.

Where: Room 1503, New Town C, No.88 Jianguolu, Chaoyang District **Open:** 9 am - 5 pm **Tel:** 8580 1923

Other Stores:

By Salinda

Beijing Lisheng Sports Shop

Where: 201 Wangfujing Dajie, Dongcheng District **Tel:** 6525 2746

Beijing Hero Economy and Trade Company

Where: 26 Wanshoulu, Haidian District **Tel:** 6820 7894

Sports 100 Shop

Where: First floor, Oriental Plaza, Dong Chang'anjie, Dongcheng District **Tel:** 8518 6168

C1 Outdoors Sports Shop

Where: 216-2, Chaoyangmen Neidajie, Chaoyang District **Tel:** 8511 4289

Alps Ski Equipment Shop

Where: 100 meters south of Anzhen bridge, Chaoyang District **Tel:** 8427 5324



- ① Helmet
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- ⑤ Ski pole
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- ⑦ Ski boot
- ⑧ Bindings
- ⑨ Snowboard

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Ski Gear Basics

By Salinda

Most ski resorts rent equipment in a wide enough range of sizes that anyone can hit the slopes. Those that want a higher class of gear or more personal feel can equip themselves, easy for beginners to do for 3,000 yuan to 10,000 yuan.

1. Skis: Beginners should choose skis from 150 to 180 centimeters long. A general rule of thumb is to buy skis five centimeters longer than one is tall. Skis come made of wood, fiberglass and metal, while the best choice is a pair that mixes all three. They range in price from 1,000 yuan to 6,000 yuan per pair. Recommended brand: HEAD

2. Ski poles: These normally aluminum poles are used to keep skiers balanced. Choose poles that measure from your elbow to the floor or your armpit to the floor. Shorter poles are easier for beginners. Price: 150 yuan – 500 yuan Recommended brand: Volkl

3. Clothing: Ski wear should be warm and water and wind resistant. A good choice for beginners is a one-piece body suit, which should be roomy to allow movement. Choose a sleeve length that goes just past your wrist when your arm is outstretched. Ski clothes are optional and often an expensive part of a ski package — normal clothes can function perfectly well on the slopes. Price: 800 yuan – 5,000 yuan Recommended brand: Volkl

4. Boots: Boots are generally divided into two types, ones for recreational skiers that are flexible and more comfortable, and professional boots that have the stiffness and support required by high-performance skiers. Avoid boots with low uppers to best protect the feet and ankles from injury. Price: 800 yuan – 2,500 yuan Recommended brand: Tecnica

5. Binding: Bindings connect boots to skis and allow them separate under stress (such as a wipeout), preventing injury. Price: 500 yuan – 3,000 yuan Recommended brand: Marker

Besides this essential gear, a well-equipped skier needs goggles, gloves, a hat, and long underwear. Don't forget to look cool.

Like Gui Jie (Ghost Street), Minzudaxue Beilu, another street famed for its collection of eateries, fell victim to the working end of the wrecking ball. That was a couple years ago, and in place of the many Xinjiang-style restaurants formerly on the street there now stands a cluster of high-rise apartments. But, good taste has stayed part of the area in the form of the eight restaurants on the south side of the street that offer a range of cuisines with which almost no other roads in Beijing can compare.

Pineapple rice at Golden Peacock Dai Ethnic Restaurant

Golden Peacock Dai Ethnic Restaurant

By Huang Lisha

While the foods available along old Xinjiang Street are undoubtedly varied, perhaps the most unusual, and the most delicious, dishes are served up at the Golden Peacock. This unassuming restaurant has been cooking up authentic foods of the Dai minority people of Yunnan Province since before most of the rest of the street was reduced to rubble. The secret? Dishes have a distinct, sweet and sour flavor at reasonable prices that makes this restaurant a favorite among nearby students and the city's gourmets.

Though there is another Yunnan restaurant next door, Golden Peacock seems the more authentic, with its Dai boss, cooks and wait-staff. The interior of the restaurant is simple, the walls covered in bamboo mats common to Dai homes and batik pictures of scenes from Xishuangbanna, the home of the Dai people.

The real test of authenticity, of course, is the food, and Golden Peacock scores full points, probably partly due to the fact that over 90 percent of the ingredients are brought up from Yunnan. A good start is the traditional dish chicken stewed in bamboo tube with clear soup (*zhutong ji*, 20 yuan), in which the chicken picks up a heady scent of fresh bamboo. Steamed fish (*qingzheng yu*, 26 yuan) has a light flavor that emphasizes the freshness of the fish. Pineapple rice, (*boluo fan*, 20 yuan), glutinous rice with pineapple chunks served in a hollowed pineapple shell, is a starch to satisfy a sweet tooth. Most patrons choose to wash down these excellent dishes with home-made rice wine (*mi jiu*), a low-alcohol concoction with a subtle sweet and sour taste.

There is a reason why this restaurant has been able to hold on along this turbulent street for so long - it is simple outstanding, and worth a try by anyone tired of tired food.

Add: Minzudaxue Beilu, Haidian District **Open:** 10am - 10pm **Tel:** 6893 2030 **Average cost:** 30 yuan per person

Maojiacai Restaurant

By Liang Hongling

The Great Helmsman himself may have liked the treats on Xinjiang Jie, especially at Maojiacai, a restaurant that specializes in fare from Chairman Mao's home of Hunan Province.

One highlight is the red-cooked pork (*hongshaorou*), Mao's favorite food, which tastes very authentic. In the 1960s, there was a common saying that being able to eat this dish everyday was a sign of a comfortable life. Today, doctors might advise against eating the fatty meat so often, but its rich flavor might still draw some to do so.

The restaurant also offers good versions of other Hunan standards. Be-



Photo by Zhuang Jian

Xinjiang Street Rises Again

cause food from that province tends to be very hot, Maojiacai looks out for more sensitive customers by marking all dishes as very spicy, spicy or ordinary. The restaurant's authenticity is backed up by how it serves rice, which

is in a small wood bowl. That may be Hunan style, but a single serving is likely to prove insufficient for hungry diners.

Maojiacai offers two fish roe (*yuza*) dishes, with the tasty stir-fried one far surpassing the bland boiled roe dish.

The restaurant has a revolutionary feeling from the many black and white pictures of Mao on the wall, and is priced to feed the masses, with a decent dinner costing just around 25 yuan per person.

Add: Minzudaxue Beijie, Haidian District **Open:** 10am - 10pm **Tel:** 6843 9049

DadongGua Restaurant

By Huang Lisha

Dadonggua is a new face along Xinjiang street, having opened only half a month ago. The restaurant specializes in *xuyi cai*, cuisine from south of the Yangtze River, that is light and tasty. It is a good alternative to the heavier fare at most Beijing eateries, including many of Dadonggua's neighbors.

The restaurant is situated in a small two-story building, with its clean kitchen and restrooms on the bottom floor and bright dining space on the second.

Xuyi, a small county near Nanjing that is home to a major annual food festival, counts crawfish among its famed local products. Therefore, the house special crawfish cooked with 13 spices (*shisanxiang longxia*, 68 yuan) is a can't-miss. Another solid dish is sour flavor fish balls (*suanwei yuyuan*, 28 yuan), fish balls, mushrooms, tomato and green vegetables stewed in clear broth to make a delicious soup. A light take on the ever-popular Sichuan dish *shuizhuyu* is fried sliced fish stewed in light oily soup (*yujin gunzhi yupian*, 28 yuan) which has a very different, less spicy and less heavy taste than its better-known cousin.

The service is excellent, with the uniformed waitstaff capable of offering credible descriptions of dishes and recommendations. With its reasonable prices, most dishes falling in the 25-40 yuan

range, Dadonggua is a great place to enjoy a guiltless, delicious meal.

Add: No. 4 Minzudaxue Beilu, Haidian District **Open:** 11am-2pm, 5pm-9pm **Tel:** 8841 0598

Tengjia Jiulou

By Liang Hongling

Rounding out the range of options on this diverse eating street is Tengjia Jiulou - a Mongolian restaurant opened by the famous Mongolian singer Teng Ge'er.

The two-story building sits next to the Xinjiang Laochen Restaurant and is well decorated. Stepping inside, diners are greeted by a portrait of Genghis Khan and a huge Mongolian tapestry, all adding to the regional, exotic feel.

The inhospitable land of Mongolia has led to the development of a somewhat limited cuisine, at least by Chinese standards. Mongolian food is heavy on meat and milk products, conditions upheld at Tengjia Jiulou.

Mutton and beef are offered in many different varieties, including roast lamb chop, roast lamb leg and roast lamb back. Traditionally, roast lamb cooked until golden red, tender and delicious, is fare served to special guests or at great celebrations.

Another traditional Mongolian food that this restaurant gets right is its special tea, made by boiling water with brick tea and fresh milk. Mongolians typically also add salt to the brew. Dairy stands out in other dishes, such as milk tofu (*naidoufu*), milk skin (*naipi*), cheese, and the many dishes that use butter.

Outside of these standards, it is worth taking a try at some of the regional snacks and stir-fried dishes on offer, such as *fa cai*, a kind of wild plant that is nutritious and has medicinal value. This restaurant is especially a treat for fans of owner Teng Ge'er, as the famed singer is known to show up sometimes and greet guests.

Add: No.10 Minzudaxue Beilu, Haidian District **Open:** 10am-10pm **Tel:** 6845 8475 **Average cost:** 40 yuan per person

Xiangcunju Restaurant

By Huang Lisha

West of Tengjia Jiulou is a Korean

restaurant called Xiangcunju. The restaurant is popular among Haidian's Korean community for the home-style feel of its dishes, mostly Korean standards like kimchee (*paocai* or *labacai*) and spicy noodles (*lamian*).

The dining rooms is split in half, one part filled with regular tables and

chairs and the other offering more traditional seating in the form of tatami mats. The waiter's recommendation of the *dajiang* soup (*dajiang tang*, 15 yuan), a common Korean soup that comes with a bowl of rice, was a delicious antidote to the cold weather. The soup includes many ingredi-

ents but is based on cabbage, tofu, pepper sauce and *dajiang* (a thick sauce made of soybeans similar to miso) and has a rich, fresh and spicy taste. Other soupy options include a wide range of Korean-style hotpots.

Xiangcunju also offers credible versions of other Korean standards, such as barbeque. The roast beef (*kaoniurou*, 25 yuan) and roast streaky pork (*kaowuhuarou*, 25 yuan), were OK, but less tasty than some of the barbeque options its Xinjiang-style neighbor. A standout was the delicious sweet potato cake, (*tudoubing*, 15 yuan), served with a small dish of soy sauce for dipping. The fried vegetables, (*zhashucai*, 18) is also not bad. The food is good and the prices reasonable, making this another strong competitor in this row of fine eating.

Add: Minzudaxue Beilu, Haidian District **Tel:** 6847 0318 **Open:** 10am - 10:30pm **Average cost:** 35 yuan per person

Laochen Restaurant

By Liang Hongling

Before the high-rises went up, the street was dominated by the spicy smells of its numerous Xinjiang-style restaurants. Now Laochen is the only one left. Mr. Chen, the boss, is from Urumqi and his restaurant is famous among many students from Xinjiang in Central University of Nationalities.

In Xinjiang cuisine, roast mutton has as significant a place as roast duck in Beijing. The meat roasted in Lao Chen is normally taken from two-year-old sheep, which the owner says have the best flavor.

Another Xinjiang standard is rice eaten with the hands (*zhua fan*), which is a tasty mixture of fresh mutton, car-

rots, and onions, lightly fried with rice. It is soft, delicious and nutritious. Traditionally, it is served at festivals, funerals and weddings and is eaten with the hands. Nowadays more people are using spoons or chopsticks to eat the dish, but the name has stuck.

Nang, a dense flat bread, is a staple food for the Uygur people of Xinjiang, just like steamed buns in northern China. It is crispy and keeps for a long time, similar to Indian naan, making it ideal for travelers in the western reaches of this country. A good way to check out two specials of the house on one tasty plate is stewed *nang* and mutton (*nang baorou*).

Dapanji is not a traditional Uygur food - this delicious dish is a new invention very popular in Xinjiang. First chicken chunks are stir-fried with sugar and then stewed with potatoes, peppers, tomatoes and beer. In the end, the whole stew is put onto a big bowl-like dish, explaining its name, which translates to "big plate chicken." For the finale, a pile of cooked wide noodles is dumped on top, great for slurping up the rich sauce.

Add: No.10 Minzudaxue Beilu, Haidian District **Open:** 11am - 10 pm **Tel:** 6893 3682 **Average cost:** 30 yuan per person

Photos by Li Shuzhuan

Food Cure

Food to Ease a Sore Head

By Wenlong

People who suffer from tension headaches can ease their pain by eating plenty of foods rich in vitamin E, such as plant oils, pears, melon seeds and almonds. This vitamin is able to neutralize the toxins that can cause headaches.

Keeping a full stomach in order to maintain blood-sugar levels is also a good idea, as low blood-sugar may also lead to headaches.

Nuisances can also be avoided by cutting down on coffee, black tea and other beverages chock full of caffeine, which decreases blood to supply to the head. Doctors recommend people drink no more than six small cups of these kinds of beverages a day.

Some people have the poor luck of harboring food allergies that can cause headaches. Preserved foods and food additives, especially the monosodium glutamate (MSG) ever-present in Chinese restaurants are common triggers of allergic headaches.



Colombian Culture Week

The Colombian Embassy is to stage a special week of events highlighting the country's glamorous cultural history. A



Primera Semana Cultural Colombiana

series of exhibitions and demonstrations will be staged. The first exhibition will feature 31 precious items. Photos of construction images from 1962 to 1994 will be showcased along with a Colombian handicrafts exhibition focusing on the country's unique cultural tradition.

Where: Jintai Art Museum, 1 Nongzhan Nanlu, Chaoyang **When:** December 16-25 **Admission:** free **Tel:** 6501 9441

Movies



Carmen and Juni

Spy Kids

Directed by Robert Rodriguez and starring Antonio Banderas, Alan Cumming, Carla Gugino, Teri Hatcher, and Cheech Marin. Gregorio and Ingrid are the two greatest secrets the world has ever known. In an exotic corner of the world they meet and fall in love. After their latest and most dangerous mission, they raise a family. Nine years later, they have two children: Carmen and Juni. When their former colleagues disappear one by one, Gregorio and Ingrid are called back into action. But the unthinkable happens and they also disappear, so Carmen and Juni must rescue their parents...

Where: local cinemas **When:** December 13



Jet Li

Shaolin Temple

The 1982 production of Shaolin Temple shows Kung fu and film star Jet Li from his early days. In the period of the late Sui Dynasty, Miraculous Leg Zhang is sacked and killed by evil master Wang Renze. His son, saved by a monk from the Shaolin Temple, grows up to learn kung fu and waits to take revenge. He finds himself involved in protecting the Shaolin Temple and saving Li Shimin, the future emperor of the Tang Dynasty. Real kung fu and eye-catching fights play against a bitersweet love story. In Chinese with English subtitles.

Where: Dongchuang Theatre, 3 Xinzhongjie, Dongzhimenwai Dajie **When:** December 19, 8:30 pm **Admission:** 30 yuan **Tel:** 6415 7332

Denti (Teeth)

Directed by Gabriele Salvatores. Antonio (Sergio Rubini) is a man perturbed by his big ugly teeth. He also believes that Mara, his partner, is having an affair with her dentist. During one of their endless quarrels, she injures his hated teeth. In need of treatment, he decides to see the alleged lover, starting a kind of pilgrimage to a crowd of dentists, driving him into a state of mental confusion caused by different diagnosis and generous doses of painkillers. His merging of childhood and adulthood, fantasy and reality, shows an insecure man searching for happiness in the midst of perceived failure. In Italian with English subtitles

Where: Italian Embassy-Cultural Office, 2, Sanlitun Dong Er Jie **When:** December 19 **Admission:** free **Email:** italcult@public.bta.net.cn

Not One Less

Though she is barely older than the students, a teenage girl is assigned as substitute teacher in a village one-room school. The village chief warns the new teacher not to allow any student to drop out. When one young boy leaves school to make money for his debt-ridden family, the girl follows him to the big city to try to get him to come back.

Where: Cherry Lane Movies, 21 Liangmaqiao Lu **When:** December 13-14, 8 pm **Admission:** 40 yuan **Tel:** 6430 1398 **Email:** michael@cherrylanemovies.com.cn

Betty Blue

Directed by Jean-Jacques Bénéix. This shocking and offbeat story fol-

lows two French lovers, Zorg and Betty, who fall into an intense and passionate relationship. Based on the novel by Philippe Djian.

Where: Space for Imagination **When:** December 17, 7 pm **Tel:** 6279 1280

The Tuxedo

Directed by Kevin Donovan and starring Jackie Chan, Jennifer Love Hewitt and Jason Isaacs. Cabbie-turned-chauffer Jimmy Tong learns there is really only one rule when you work for playboy millionaire Clark Devlin: never touch Devlin's prized tuxedo. But when Devlin is temporarily put out of commission in an explosive accident, Jimmy can't resist trying on the tux and soon discovers that this extraordinary suit may be more black belt than black tie.

Where: Jingsong Cinema **When:** December 13-19

Activities

Happy Tonight

Music will be brought to you by the MIX in-house DJ and there is also a lucky draw with great prizes including three free memberships to Evolution Fitness and a bottle of Moët & Chandon provided by Magellan International Movers. Plus one free beer on entry with loads of other drinks and food available.

Where: MIX club, North Gate of Worker's Stadium **When:** December 18, 6:30 pm **Tel:** 6530 2889.



Thread-bound bookmaking

Make Your Own Ancient Xuan Paper

If you are interested in the arts of ancient Chinese papermaking, printing and thread-bound bookmaking, this is an opportunity for you to participate in these activities. You can make your own paper and print your message on it.

Where: Kerry Mall **When:** till December 14, 10:30 am-5 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 8529 8383



Santa and children

Santa and Me

Santa is in town! He is staying with us until Christmas Eve. That gives us time to take that once a year photo with Santa and the kids. Gather up your friends, family and children to take photos with the real Santa Claus!

Where: Lobby of Lido Hotel **When:** till December 24, (except Monday), 7-8 pm **Cost:** 30 yuan per photo **Tel:** 6437 6688

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By Guo Yuandan

Discount

Get Your Fanous Brands Here

Almost 30 world-famous clothing brands including Aigner, Celine, Cerruti, Christian Dior, Dunhill and others are available at discounts. It is only one time in this year.

Where: First floor, China World Hotel **When:** December 12-15, 11 am-8 pm **Tel:** 6505 2288 ext 8046

And Here...

Private Collection Shop carries 2 complete collections of Ametrine and Gianna brands, plus various big brand names of career suits, ball gowns and casual wears. Besides, hand bags, cashmere and silk scarfs are also available at affordable price.

Where: 912, Consulting Building, near World Trade Center **When:** December 16-31, 10 am-6 pm **Tel:** 6505 1119 ext 251

Health

Have a Flu Shot at Your Home

After taking an Influenza vaccination, you will have antibodies in two weeks. The Flu antigen composition and strains are determined by the World Health Organization (WHO) and manufactured by SSW Germany. Total charge for 150 yuan per person. Acupuncture, massage, herbal medicine, Qi gong and Tai Ji 120 yuan per hour.

Tel: 6538 6113 or 13001 104006. **email:** jianjunq@a-1.net.cn

Sports

The Secret Valley

This walk is rich in dramatic rocks and riverbeds, fruit trees and history. This valley was once a home for monks. There are two ruins here. It's called the secret valley because it is not visible unless you climb up the mountains around it. The walk will start at 8:30 am at the Lido Hotel, outside Starbucks and 9 am at Capital Paradise, returning at 4:30 pm.

Where: Changping, north of Beijing **When:** December 15 **Admission:** adults 150 yuan, children 100 yuan **Tel:** 13701 003694 **Email:** bjhikers@yahoo.co.uk

Performance

Tour of Secret Border

To celebrate the 50th Anniversary of China Central Song and Dance Ensemble, there will be a large-scale original song & dance show. "Secret border" means the western part and the southwest of China. The audience will be led on a tour of these magical lands.

Where: Poly Theatre **When:** December 13-17, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 120-800 yuan **Tel:** 6592 8449, 6528 7673



Happy New Year

"My Dream" for the New Year

Performed by the China Disabled People's Performing Art Troupe. The 100-member China Disabled People's Chorus will offer a choral performance, conducted by sound musician Nie Zhongming. The show will include The Blue Danube and other pieces.

Where: Century Theater **When:** December 19-21, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 180-800 yuan **Tel:** 6528 7750 ext 198

New York MM Ballet Group—The Nutcracker

The programme includes the one-act ballet "Murder in Buenos Aires", a dance based on Beethoven's "Moonlight" piano sonata and part of Tchaikovsky's "Nutcracker".

Where: Century Theatre **When:** December 13-14, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 80-600 yuan **Tel:** 6528 7673 ext 508



A poster for MM ballet group

Exhibitions

Disappearing Hutongs

Hutongs are one of Beijing's most outstanding characteristics. This is an exhibition of 50 oil paintings of hutongs by Li Jing and Liu Yan, depicting the various aspects of the lives of their residents.

Where: New Millennium Art Gallery, second floor, Diyang Building, 2 Dongsanhuan Beilu Chaoyang **When:** December 19-January 15, 2003, 9 am-6 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 8453 6193

Oil Painting from Nature

Yang Feiyun, professor of the Central Institute of Fine Arts, took his students to Russia where they painted the beautiful, rugged landscapes. Over 200 works in this exhibition show the beauty of nature.

Where: East Gallery, Deshengmen Watchtower, north Second Ring Road Xicheng **When:** December 14-31, 9 am-5 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 8201 4962



Color painting by Yu Jiantao

Joint Water Color Paintings

More than 30 water color masterpieces by Huang Youwei, Yin Wanfu, Li Shengquan, Lin congri, Wang Dahan, Yu Jiantao and Wu Yuanmou are on display. Huang Youwei focuses on flowers, villages and hutongs. Self-taught artist Yu Jiantao from Dalian has a special passion for the ocean, but ordinary objects such as a building, a tree, a boat or even eroded rocks all take on the unrelenting power of life.

Where: Wanfung Gallery, 136 Nanchizi Dajie Dongcheng **When:** till December 19 **Admission:** free **Tel:** 6523 3320 **Email:** gallery@wanfung.com.cn

Chinese Paintings

The works of famous landscape artists Li Xiongcai, Song Di, Feng Linzhang, Zhao Wuchao, Du Yingqiang, Feng Yiming and others are on display.

Where: Wanfung Gallery, 136 Nanchizi Dajie Dongcheng **When:** till December 29 **Admission:** free **Tel:** 6523 3320

Lecture



Dragon

The Dragon and Father Christmas

Unlike the European dragon, the Chinese version was considered a beneficent beast until Buddhists introduced the concept of evil dragons. Yet the basic belief was always that the dragon had noble spiritual qualities that were unconquerable. But what does the Chinese Dragon have in common with Father Christmas? The well-known Chinese history lecturer, Roy Bates, will give a talk on the subject. He has spent many years in China researching its history.

Where: Lee's Antique Carpets **When:** December 15, 2:30-4:30 pm **Admission:** adults 40 yuan, students 30 yuan **Tel:** 8851 4913

Language exchange

A woman named Julia Hu is seeking a native French speaker for language exchange. If a French would like to learn Chinese speaker, please contact her as soon as possible. **Tel:** 13693 068101

A 20-year-old Chinese girl working in the finance company wants to find a native English student aged above 50 to practice oral English. **email:** chengyu@sina.com

Music

The Planets

Holst's famous symphony, featuring Ruth Miller (flute), Anne-Kathrin Schirmer (classical & electric guitars), Beverley Jones (double bass, bass guitar, vocals), Jonathan Hill (Violin), Lac-Hong Phi (Cello), Ben Pugsley (classical, flamenco and electric guitars) and Michael Kruk (drums and percussion). Guest performers: Beijing Red Poppy Ladies Percussion.

Where: Beijing Exhibition Theatre **When:** December 17, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 80-500 yuan



Inner-Mongolia

Folk Song from Inner-Mongolia

Some of the most famous singers from Inner-Mongolia bring you classic folk songs

Where: The Forbidden City Concert Hall **When:** December 13, 7:30 pm **Tel:** 6528 7673 ext 198

Opera Concert

Famous arias from operas by Mozart and Rossini featuring Shen Yun, Li Jingshun, Sun Shali, Wei Xin, Li Tiaotiao, Meng Qingchao, Bao Jinghui, Li Yunkuan and Zhong Hao.

Where: National Library Concert Hall **When:** December 14, 2:30 pm **Admission:** 10-30 yuan **Tel:** 6842 2047

Parties

Christmas Kids Party

It's a kid's paradise, with many interesting activities including a stepdance, amazing magic performance, entertaining games and lucky draws.

Where: Grand Ballroom, Shangri-La hotel, 29 Zizhuyuan Lu, Handian **When:** December 15, 11 am-3 pm **Admission:** adults 168 yuan, kids under 12 years old 128 yuan **Tel:** 6841 2211 ext 2776 **Email:** slb@shangri-la.com

Charity Party

A Christmas charity party features old-school funk, soul and samba sounds of DJs Daddy Vegas, Wassabi and Barking Bob.

Where: Club FM, at the south gate of Ritan Park, Chaoyang **When:** December 14, 8 pm **Tel:** 8562 2308

The Night of Fun

Make merry this Christmas and get down and celebrate with friends. Party tunes provided as guest DJs join Rude, Elf & Sly Nose larging it all night long. Lucky draws until the early hours and lots of surprises besides!

Where: Vics, inside Workers Stadium north gate, Chaoyang **When:** December 24, 7 pm (Presales: 50 yuan, Available from Vics till December 18) **Admission:** 150 yuan (on the night) **Tel:** 6593 6215

Fantastic Night

Punk Club Website has their first show on December 13. The next night is Howl Disc night.

Where: Get Lucky, 500 meters east of the south gate of the University of International Business and Economics, Chaoyang **When:** November 13-14, 9 pm **Admission:** adults 30 yuan, students 20 yuan **Tel:** 6429 9109, 6420 4249



Afrika Djs

African Night

Africa United DJs bring you the hot sounds of African Dance Hall, Reggae, Ragga, Zouk, Zaiko, Soul, Hip Hop and much more.

Where: Club Orange **When:** December 14, 10 pm **Admission:** 30 yuan **Tel:** 13681 061172

Calling All Amateur Thespians!

By Guo Yuandan

You might find yourself sitting in Poly theatre, having paid 800 yuan to watch beautiful women and handsome men playing the lead in a drama and wondering what it might be like to be in the spotlight yourself. If so, head over to Shangpingwang (上平望) Theater Bar, a small siheyuan theatre where you don't have to be a pro to take the lead.

Get up

Shangpingwang Theater Bar encourages amateur actors to live out their dreams. Zhang Baolin, the owner of the bar, is addicted to modern drama and has such a strong passion for it that he always wanted to act himself. But he found there were no theatres in Beijing catering for people like him, so he set up Shangpingwang Theater Bar.

There's been a steady stream

of would-be actors ready to step up ever since. One of the bar's patrons, Mrs. Wang, said, "Beijing's been crying out for this kind of bar. It'll be a great success if it is well operated." Since the bar opened on November 18, four modern dramas have already been staged successfully.

After Zhang Baolin put up advertisements, students of the Central Academy of Drama eagerly signed up for the first play in the theater bar. Though the stage is very small and simple and the actors and crew were all inexperienced, everyone was committed and conscientious. Wang Xiaoman, who played the part of a girl who is disappointed in a love affair, said, "We all value this opportunity. This experience will help us develop the ability to take on important roles in future."

The actors all encourage one

another. When the play ended, many members of the audience signed up for future productions. None of them were professional actors.

According to their free time and requirements of the roles, Gao Shan and Zhao Jia, were selected to play for a second time. Zhao Jia told Beijing Today, "Playing in Shangpingwang feels very good. There are no nerves, it's as though you're acting in your own home. The audience are my friends, so I can get into my character without any problems." Li Xin, a company manager, will play a part in this weekend's play. He said, "I am glad to have this opportunity to act. Because it is my first time, I feel a little nervous. I hope I do okay."

Zhang Baolin says that Shangpingwang is the smallest theater in Beijing, but that it has the most actors, because anyone who



Photo by Lucky

is interested in drama can join and play a role.

Under a bushel

The bar is in a siheyuan, tucked away at No. 3 Jingshan Qianjie and surrounded by shops. Push the door open and the bell rings but no one comes out to meet you. You find yourself in a siheyuan with a Zhaobi (a screen wall facing the gate of a house) with several potted flowers on it blocking your view of the yard. Looking around the yard, you might wonder where the stage is. Zhang Baolin points to the left room. The stage is small, with

no curtain, no lighting and no scenery. In fact the stage is not limited to the room; if necessary, the whole bar is the stage. Zhang believes drama is rooted in real life, and should not always be restricted to a special stage. "Maybe our drama is not artistry," he says, "but it is no different from that performed by famous people, because we get into all the characters when acting."

What is the bar like? Li Li, another patron, says "it's like a home more than a bar. Though the place is small and simple, I feel warm and comfortable." Wang

Wei, a friend of Zhang Baolin, said there was more to this bar than booze. "Playing drama can enrich people's lives, and satisfy their cultural interests."

How to attend

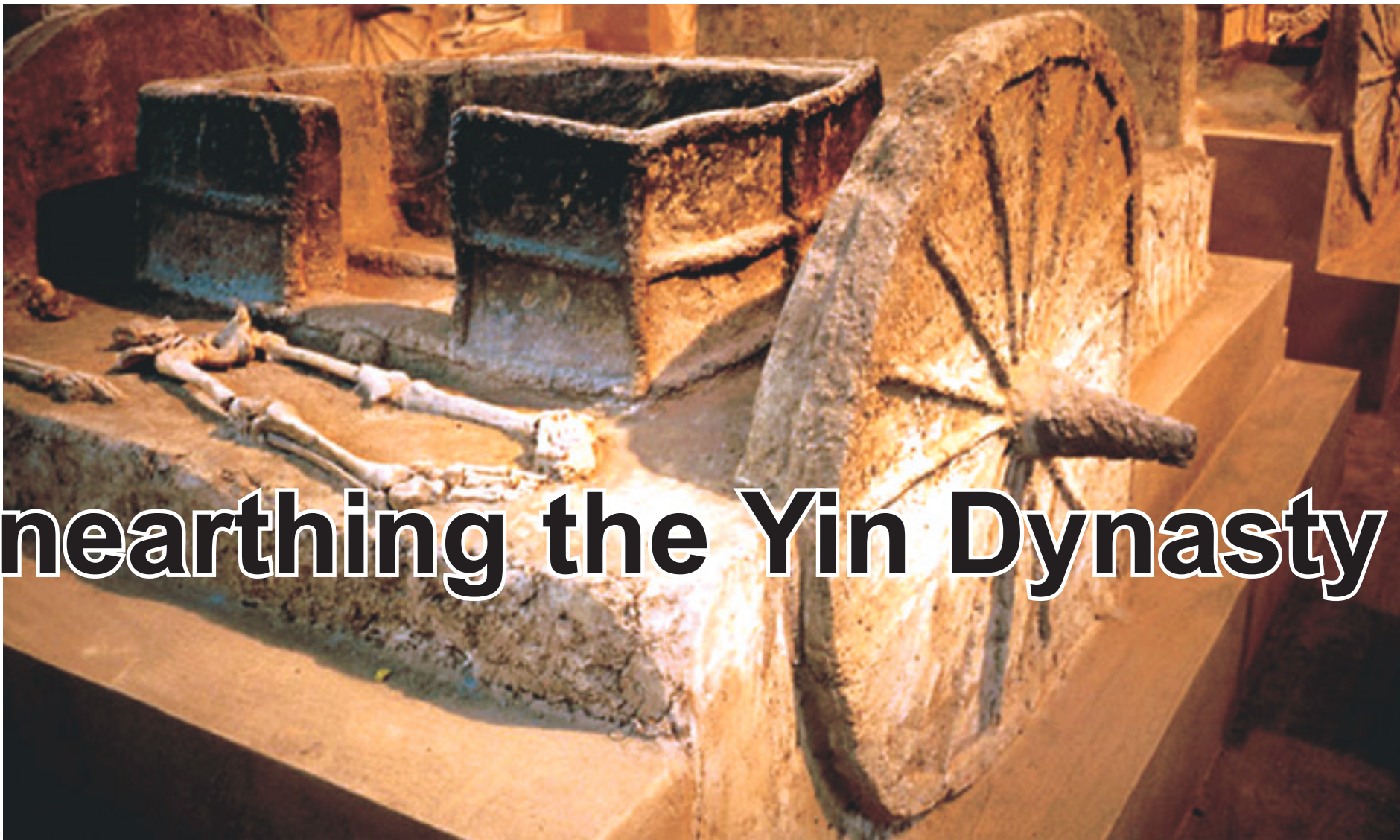
Zhang believes anyone who has secretly harbored a desire to creep the boards will not be able to resist the temptation. You just need to fill in a form with your name, telephone number, saying when you have free time and your favorite role. Budding directors are also welcome. If you want to act in a play with your friends, that's also okay.

Address: No. 3 Jingshan Qianjie, opposite the watchtower at the southwest corner of the Palace Museum **Time:** 9 am-10 pm **Plays:** on weekends, 8-9 pm

Route: by No. 109, 8, 20, 101, 110, and 846, 812, to Shatan. **Admission:** 50 yuan **Tel:** 6400 9372, 13910975073

Culture Tour

U



A burial carriage and the stones of a sacrificed slave.

Photos by Chai Qingchun

By Jerry Ho/Chai Qingchun

Anyone wanting to dig up a piece of ancient China should consider a visit to the ruins of the Yin Dynasty, where the ancient characters of Jiagu were discovered. The characters were inscribed on bones and tortoise shells of the Yin and Shang Dynasties between the 16th and 11th centuries BC. A museum containing the Jiagu characters and other archeological finds has been set up in Anyang (安阳), Henan Province, 60kms away from another famous city, Handan (邯郸), in Hebei Province. Handan used to be the capital city of the Zhao Kingdom in the Warring States Period and Anyang, as the capital of the Yin dynasty, is considered one of the seven greatest capitals in Chinese history.

In the year 1300 BC, King Pangeng of the Shang Dynasty moved his capital from Qufu (now a city in Shandong Province) to Anyang, thus beginning the Yin dynasty. It lasted for 254 years and ended during the reign of King Zhou in 1046 BC. A museum was built in 1987 to collect archeological finds of the Yin Dynasty, covering remains of the palaces, parts of palaces that have been restored in their original form, finds from the site where the Jiagu Characters were found in

the 1880s, the Fuhao Tomb (妇好墓) found in 1976 and burial carriages and slaves.

The big black gate of the museum, painted in red and black, was made in the shape of the Jiagu character for "gate". A dragon pattern on the gate is copied from a dragon-shaped piece of jade found in the Fuhao Tomb which is considered to be the earliest dragon pattern in China.

The Tomb of Fuhao Fuhao was said to be the second wife of King Wuding of the Shang and Yin Dynasty. As a female general, Fuhao fought bravely and won many battles. Hence, she was granted the right to be buried in the palace area of the kingdom. Her tomb was discovered and excavated in the 1970s. Findings from the tomb - drinking vessels, weapons and musical



Decoration on a pillar of one of the palaces.

instruments made of jade, bronze or ivory - were of high historic and cultural importance. Most of them were marked with the name of "Fuhao" in Jiagu characters. An interesting item is a cow made of jade. There is also a set of musical instruments called Biannao (a series of cymbals in different sizes with varying tones). Many of the items on display in the museum are



Stone statues are copies of unearthed jade items.

duplicates as the originals are with the National Historical Museum of China. Two rows of animal statues are placed on either side of a passageway leading to the tomb. From a distance, it looks like soldiers escorting the imposing general.

The Sacrifices

Around the years of 1999 and 2000, more than 40 burial carriages were unearthed around the ruins. Six of them



Steles with Jiagu characters.

are well preserved. Along with the carriages a lot of human skeletons were also found. They are believed to be those of slaves used for sacrifices. Marks on the bones showed that they had been cut on the neck or waist. Slavery in Chinese history reached its peak during the Shang and Yin dynasties. Its notorious cruelty is well illustrated here.

The Jiagu Characters

With the startling discovery of the Jiagu Characters, the recorded history of China dated back to 1300 BC. The famous inscriptions, created more than 3,000 years ago, share equal fame with the ancient characters of Egypt, Babylon and India. The bones with Jiagu characters were first found in 1880 by local villagers. They believed that they were legendary dragon bones capable of curing all diseases.

In 1899, some of the bones were sold to Tianjin. Wang Yirong, one of the buyers, thought the characters on the bones belonged to an archaic language. As word spread, the inscriptions were studied and an ancient culture began to be unearthed from the deep ground of a remote province. Extensive excavations were carried out in the 1920s and 1930s. Now there are altogether 160,000 items with



Stone statues are copies of unearthed jade items.

inscriptions of Jiagu characters all over the world, among which 100,000 pieces are kept in China.

Tips

Ruins of Yin Dynasty are located in the suburbs of Anyang in Henan Province. The Jingguang (京广线 Beijing to Guangzhou) Railway, Jingzhu (京珠线 Beijing to Zhuhai) Express Highway and state expressway No. 106 and 107

(106 and 107国道) all run through the city.

The museum hosts a display of all the archaeological findings of the Jiagu characters. Steles inscribed with the characters have also been built for public exhibition.

The Museum of the Yin Ruins is built upon the site of the excavations on the west side of the Huanshui River. On the east side of the river there is a cultural display of the Shang and Yin Dynasty.

Admission fee to the Museum is 21 yuan. Phone: 0372-3932171, 3925300. It is advisable to hire a guide (charges: 20 yuan) as this will greatly help in understanding the Yin Ruins and culture.

Excavations of the palace area are continuing at the Yin Ruins. Some of the palaces are being restored or rebuilt in their original form.

There are a lot of other tourist attractions around the ancient city of Anyang, such as the town of Maili (羑里城) and the temple of Yuefei (岳飞庙) a famous general of the late Song Dynasty who fought against the invasion of Jin) at Tangyin, the Hongqi (red flag) canal (红旗渠) built in the 1970s for irrigation purposes, and the wonderful scenery of the Taihang Mountains (太行山).